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THE

CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

VOLUME II.

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Cologne Cathedral.

THE

CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

A Tale of the Middle Ages

BY

CHARLES READE

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE," "PEG WOFFINGTON," ETC.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

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THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH.

CHAPTER I.

THINGS good and evil balance themselves in a remarkable manner; and almost universally. The steel bow attached to the arbalister's back, and carried above his head, had sunk him. That very steel bow, owing to that very position, could not escape Gerard's hands, one of which grasped it, and the other went between the bow and the cord, which was as good. The next moment, Denys by means of his cross-bow, was hoisted with so eager a jerk that half his body bobbed up out of water.

'Now, grip me not! grip me not!' cried Gerard, in mortal terror of that fatal mistake.

'Pas si bête,' gurgled Denys.

Seeing the sort of stuff he had to deal with, Gerard was hopeful and calm directly. 'On thy back,' said he, sharply; and seizing the

arbalest and taking a stroke forward he aided the desired movement. 'Hand on my shoulder! Slap the water with the other hand! No; with a downward motion: so. Do nothing more than I bid thee.'

Gerard had got hold of Denys's long hair, and twisting it hard, caught the end between his side teeth, and with the strong muscles of his youthful neck easily kept up the soldier's head, and struck out lustily across the current. A moment he had hesitated which side to make for, little knowing the awful importance of that simple decision; then, seeing the west bank a trifle nearer, he made toward it, instead of swimming to jail like a good boy, and so furnishing one a novel incident. Owing to the force of the current they slanted considerably, and when they had covered near a hundred yards, Denys murmured uneasily, 'How much more of it?'

'Courage,' mumbled Gerard. 'Whatever a duck knows, a Dutchman knows; art safe as in bed.'

The next moment, to their surprise, they found themselves in shallow water; and so waded ashore. Once on terra firma, they looked at each other from head to foot as if eyes could devour, then by one impulse flung

each an arm round the other's neck, and panted there with hearts too full to speak. And at this sacred moment life was sweet as heaven to both, — sweetest perhaps to the poor exiled lover, who had just saved his friend. (Oh, joy, — to whose height what poet has yet soared, or ever tried to soar? — to save a human life; and that life a loved one. Such moments are worth living for, — ay, threescore years and ten.) And then, calmer, they took hands, and so walked along the bank hand-in-hand like a pair of sweethearts, scarce knowing or caring whither they went.

The boat people were all safe on the late concave now convex craft. Herr Turnip-face, the 'Inverter of things,' being in the middle. All this fracas seemed not to have essentially deranged his habits. At least he was greeting when he shot our friends into the Rhine, and greeting when they got out again.

'Shall we wait till they right the boat?'

'No, Denys, our fare is paid; we owe them nought. Let us on, and briskly.'

Denys assented, observing that they could walk all the way to Cologne on this bank.

'I fare not to Cologne,' was the calm reply.

'Why, whither then?'

'To Burgundy.'

'To Burgundy? Ah, no! that is too good to be sooth.'

'Sooth 't is; and sense into the bargain. What matters it to me how I go to Rome?'

'Nay, nay; you but say so to pleasure me. The change is too sudden; and think me not so ill-hearted as take you at your word. Also did I not see your eyes sparkle at the wonders of Cologne? — the churches, the images, the relics —'

'How dull art thou, Denys; that was when we were to enjoy them together. Churches; I shall see plenty, go Romeward how I will. The bones of saints and martyrs; alas! the world is full of them: but a friend like thee, where on earth's face shall I find another? No; I will not turn thee farther from the road that leads to thy dear home, and her that pines for thee. Neither will I rob myself of thee by leaving thee. Since I drew thee out of Rhine I love thee better than I did. Thou art my pearl: I fished thee; and must keep thee. So gainsay me not, or thou wilt bring back my fever; but cry courage, and lead on, — and hey for Burgundy!'

Denys gave a joyful caper! 'Courage! va pour la Bourgogne. Oh, soyez tranquille!

cette fois il est bien décidément mort, ce coquin là.' And they turned their backs on the Rhine.

On this decision making itself clear, across the Rhine there was a commotion in the little party that had been watching the discussion, and the friends had not taken many steps ere a voice came to them over the water. 'Halt!'

Gerard turned, and saw one of those four holding out a badge of office and a parchment slip. His heart sank; for he was a good citizen, and used to obey the voice that now bade him turn again to Dusseldorf, — the law's.

Denys did not share his scruples. He was a Frenchman, and despised every other nation, — laws, inmates, and customs included. He was a soldier, and took a military view of the situation. Superior force opposed; river between; rear open; why, 't was retreat made easy. He saw at a glance that the boat still drifted in mid stream, and there was no ferry nearer than Dusseldorf. 'I shall beat a retreat to that hill,' said he, 'and then, being out of sight, quick-step.'

They sauntered off.

'Halt! in the bailiff's name,' cried a voice from the shore.

Denys turned round and ostentatiously

snapped his fingers at the bailiff, and proceeded.

'Halt! in the archbishop's name.'

Denys snapped his fingers at his grace, and proceeded.

'Halt! in the emperor's name.'

Denys snapped his fingers at his majesty, and proceeded.

Gerard saw this needless pantomime with regret, and as soon as they had passed the brow of the hill said, 'There is now but one course, —we must run to Burgundy instead of walking;' and he set off, and ran the best part of a league without stopping.

Denys was fairly blown, and inquired what on earth had become of Gerard's fever. 'I begin to miss it sadly,' said he, dryly.

'I dropped it in Rhine, I trow,' was the reply.

Presently they came to a little village, and here Denys purchased a loaf and a huge bottle of Rhenish wine. For he said, 'We must sleep in some hole or corner. If we lie at an inn we shall be taken in our beds.'

This was no more than common prudence on the old soldier's part. The official network for catching law-breakers, especially plebeian ones, was very close in that age, though the co-opera-

tion of the public was almost null, — at all events upon the Continent. The innkeepers were everywhere under close surveillance as to their travellers, for whose acts they were even in some degree responsible, — more so, it would seem, than for their sufferings.

The friends were both glad when the sun set, and delighted when, after a long trudge under the stars (for the moon, if I remember right, did not rise till about three in the morning), they came to a large barn belonging to a house at some distance. A quantity of barley had been lately threshed, for the heap of straw on one side the threshing-floor was almost as high as the unthreshed corn on the other.

'Here be two royal beds,' said Denys; 'which shall we lie on, the mow or the straw?'

'The straw for me,' said Gerard.

They sat on the heap, and ate their brown bread, and drank their wine; and then Denys covered his friend up in straw, and heaped it high above him, leaving him only a breathing-hole: 'Water, they say, is death to fevered men; I 'll make warm water on 't anyhow.'

Gerard bade him make his mind easy. 'These few drops from Rhine cannot chill me. I feel heat enough in my body now to parch a kennel, or boil a cloud if I was in one.' And with this

epigram his consciousness went so rapidly he might really be said to 'fall asleep.'

Denys, who lay awake awhile, heard that which made him nestle closer. Horses' hoofs came ringing up from Dusseldorf; and the wooden barn vibrated as they rattled past, howling in a manner too well known and understood in the fifteenth century, but as unfamiliar in Europe now as a red Indian's war-whoop.

Denys shook where he lay. Gerard slept like a top. It all swept by, and troop and howls died away. The stout soldier drew a long breath, whistled in a whisper, closed his eyes, and slept like top 2.

In the morning he sat up and put out his hand to wake Gerard. It lighted on the young man's forehead, and found it quite wet. Denys then, in his quality of nurse, forbore to wake him. 'It is ill to check sleep or sweat in a sick man,' said he. 'I know that far, though I ne'er minced ape nor gallows-bird.'

After waiting a good hour, he felt desperately hungry; so he turned, and in self-defence went to sleep again.

Poor fellow, in his hard life he had been often driven to this manœuvre. At high noon he was waked by Gerard moving, and found him sitting up with the straw smoking round him like a

dunghill. Animal heat versus moisture. Gerard called him 'a lazy loon.' He quietly grinned.

They set out; and the first thing Denys did was to give Gerard his arbalest, etc., and mount a high tree on the road. 'Coast clear to the next village,' said he; and on they went.

On drawing near the village Denys halted, and suddenly inquired of Gerard how he felt.

'What! can you not see? I feel as if Rome was no farther than yon hamlet.'

'But thy body, lad; thy skin?'

'Neither hot nor cold; and yesterday 't was hot one while and cold another. But what I cannot get rid of is this tiresome leg.'

'Le grand malheur! Many of my comrades have found no such difficulty.'

'Ah! there it goes again; itches consumedly.'

'Unhappy youth,' said Denys, solemnly, 'the sum of thy troubles is this: thy fever is gone, and thy wound is — healing. Sith so it is,' added he, indulgently, 'I shall tell thee a little piece of news I had otherwise withheld.'

'What is 't?' asked Gerard, sparkling with curiosity.

'The hue and cry is out after us, and on fleet horses.'

'Oh!'

CHAPTER II.

GERARD was staggered by this sudden communication, and his colour came and went, —then he clinched his teeth with ire, — for men of any spirit at all are like the wild boar: he will run from a superior force, owing perhaps to his not being an ass; but if you stick to his heels too long and too close, and, in short, bore him, he will whirl, and come tearing at a multitude of hunters, and perhaps bore you. Gerard then set his teeth and looked battle; but the next moment his countenance fell, and he said plaintively, 'And my axe is in Rhine.'

They consulted together. Prudence bade them avoid that village: hunger said, 'Buy food.'

Hunger spoke loudest, prudence most convincingly. They settled to strike across the fields.

As they went, the very eyes of the pair betrayed the difference in their minds: so quick and outward were those of Denys, so ruminating and inward Gerard's.

'Halt at this haystack,' said the latter. 'Now tell me by what clew are these following us; they know us not.'

'Why, by description, sure. Simpleton, they have got our habit and arms and faces to the letter, and writ out fair by the town-clerk, I warrant ye.'

'I guessed as much. Well, then, I 'll confound their description and them too. Give me thy buff jerkin. Keep thou my purse; 't is large and noticeable. Now take thou my long hair and twist it under my bonnet. Said I twist it off? Now move not for thy life.'

He ran off, and Denys passed two mortal hours of utter wretchedness. He wanted to be doing, and instead of that he was passive. He was out of his part, and became in some respects his own opposite, — so narrow are our strongest qualities. He had as many misgivings and feeble fears for Gerard absent and left to his own resources as any old granddame for her boy pet when out of sight, only it broke out in violence instead of wailing. 'Oh, if they touch but a hair of his head, I 'll burn their village to the ground, and shoot them down like vermin by the light of their own ruin. May Satan twist my neck and fry my soul, but I 'll cut every male throat young or

old that has the ill-luck but to look on and see my dear comrade harmed.' And so after the first hour he went on, mixing rage with tenderness, and good with ill, and, above all, vomiting language, to hear which one might really wonder Heaven did not strike him dead. Nor, while I sacrifice perfect truth of portraiture to decency by thinning those expletives with which his talk was garnished, or rather measled, do I aim to conceal from my readers the broad fact that this Burgundian soldier was on the surface what we humble civilians call a bit of a blackguard.

At last, just as he had determined, spite of orders, to go into the village and rescue his comrade or share his fate, Gerard pounced upon him from behind the hedge, having made a complete circuit.

'Embrace me!' cried Denys. 'Ah, drôle [angrily]! Polisson [tenderly]! You have made me pass an ill quarter of an hour. Enfin te voilà; soupons. As I live! a sausage as big as one's leg, a loaf, and a galopin botel.'

'Ay, lad, but what is in my wallet? Divine that!'

'Nay, I know not. A dead cat?'

'Monster! no. Fire.'

'Then pull it forth ere it nips thee; 't is a

marvellous unwholesome lodger in a man's shirt-tail, is your whorson fire.'

'Nay, this is tame fire; and here is his cage,' and Gerard produced a flint and tinder-box,—item, brimstone matches; item, two short but thick candles, with rush wicks (the only ones then known),—and eyed them all like a doting parent.

Over their meal he told his story.

'On leaving you first I cut a staff; for I said, "In their description will be no staff, and every little furthers confusion." Then, what did I? Oh, then I thought.'

'I still leave that to the last,' remarked Denys, with his mouth brim full.

'It is as well, perhaps. Then I bent and hobbled painfully with my stick, as one worn out. Then I doffed my good shoon and bestowed them in my wallet, and soiled my feet in a kennel, and so into their village.'

'Young man,' said Denys, solemnly, 'experience hath been niggardly to thee, but Nature is filling the gap by degrees; I have watched her at her work with interest. En avant!'

'But or ever I wend to the first homestead, what should pass me full gallop but a pursuivant, brave as a popinjay, with a tin trump, and parchments thereto attached. At the vil-

lage cross he dismounts, doffs his bonnet to the cross, blows his horn, and there fixes a goodly parchment.'

'Our description!' shouted Denys, with a rattling oath. 'Why was not I within shot of the knave! Didst not shake in thy shoon?'

'For a minute. But by good luck the priest was abroad; and of all the frieze jerkins and striped fardingales that gathered round the well, not one, as it chanced, could read, but only levelled their eyes on 't and thrust forth their noses.'

'Like venison stationed sniffing up at a scarlet rag. Methinks I see the boors. Forward!'

'Then up hobbled I and with feigned labour spelled out the writing aloud, the folk hanging on my words.'

'We shall hang on something better windproof,' said Denys, going suddenly into a great passion. ''T was foolhardy.'

Gerard wore a lofty expression. 'Poor Denys,' said he, patronizingly; 'dost really think I read it forth as writ? Nay, I embellished it.'

'Anan?'

'I drew the two ends farther apart.'

'Comment?'

'I heightened you and lowered me.'

'Plait-il?'

'Well, then; Denys, you are a veteran, you know. How often have I heard you say it!'

'And who gainsays it? Twelve years' hard service, mort du diable!'

'And in age you are eight-and-twenty.'

'On St. Denys his day,' — doffing his cap.

'Well, then I read you forth to the folk a veteran.'

'And I, being a veteran, tell you truth is not to be spoken at all times, far less read out to a man's foes.'

'Patience! I made you out a real veteran, — the veteran of painters and minstrels.'

'Gramercy,' said the veteran, peevishly. 'Small is my gain. Your minstrels are liars and knaves and sots, and the greatest vagabonds going.'

'Except those whose deeds they chant.'

'Granted,' said Denys, with contemptuous indifference. The sly Gerard had got him out of his depth.

'To tell the real truth,' continued Gerard, 'I painted you to those boors partly from the Dusseldorf parchment, but mainly from a sketch of a veteran, by Hubert Van Eyck. His sister Margaret, my most dear friend, showed it me oft. Thus I dwelt much on thine arbalest and

thy sword, also on my axe, which I thought was deep in Rhine, but lo 't was on that parchment all the time.'

Denys winked, but irresolutely; his sense of humour being somewhat impeded by his ire.

'Thy great hideous beard I kept religiously, being thy friend, and divining by thy handling it from morn till night that thou art proud on 't. Well-a-day! of what cannot men make shift to be proud? But though I plucked not a single bristle, I snowed upon them all; and thy sunny locks I did properly grizzle, and somewhat curbed thy stiff neck and the pikestaff in thy backbone. Why, how now, veteran, thine eyes have vanished wholly! One would say thy crows' feet had stamped them into thy head, and shut both windows on 'em; for nought is visible where peepers were eftsoon.'

'They have but stepped in a-doors to ponder thy unparalleled knavery, thou fox in gooseskin! Forward!'

'Well, then, in this my pictured veteran's hand I set — what? Divine!'

'Who can divine thee, fathomless impostor? What was 't, eh? eh?'

'A tender stripling.'

'Sapling thou wouldst say.'

'No; no sapling, — that is, metaphor apart,

— but a downy stripling, a tender innocent, of about thirteen. My years had skipped away from me to thee, I trow ; but what of that ? Have not good comrades all in common, say ? '

' Parbleu ! '

' This done, I bought all these kickshaws, and could hardly get the merchant to look at me or reckon the change, for peering o'er my head after the veteran and his cub. (Four golden angels reward, Denys !) So then I went through the town, and prudently came round a league to you. You can go to the village, too, as you like ; what hinders ? They will cluster about you crying, " *Young man*, have you seen a *veteran* on the road, — an old hoary sinner of a soldier, with a crossbow on his rogue's back and a little scrubby boy in 's hand ? " '

Denys gave a squeak and rolled in the loose hay, seeing which Gerard hummed the old French rhyme, —

> ' Un bon vieillard — a,
> Et un jeune moutard — a.'

and laughed almost as lustily as the other. For wit tells not always by its merit, but its circumstance. A very gentle stroke of humour makes the heart dance with gayety when it brings some solid advantage with it, or relieves some pressing care. Nay, I do not doubt that could

you save Nestor's life with a pun, or mere jingle of words, —

> 'Nestor would swear the jest was laughable.'

This triumph, however, did not long shut their eyes to the peril that still environed them. Upon reflection they carried each a bundle of hay to a deep ditch hard by, and there lay till nightfall, and then Denys proposed a night march. They started about ten o'clock, and walked all night barefooted. It was a dismal night, dark as pitch, and blowing hard. They could neither see nor hear, nor be seen nor heard; and for aught I know, passed like ghosts close to their foes. These they almost forgot in the natural horrors of the black tempestuous night, in which they seemed to grope and hew their way as in black marble. When the moon rose they were many a league from Dusseldorf. But they still trudged on. Presently they came to a huge building.

'Courage!' cried Denys, 'I think I know this convent. Ay, it is. We are in the see of Juliers. Cologne has no power here.'

The next moment they were safe within the walls.

CHAPTER III.

HERE Gerard made acquaintance with a monk who had constructed the great dial in the prior's garden, and a wheel for drawing water, and a winnowing machine for the grain, etc., and had ever some ingenious mechanism on hand. He had made several psalteries and two dulcimers, and was now attempting a set of regalles, or little organ, for the choir.

Now, Gerard played the humble psaltery a little; but the monk touched that instrument divinely, and showed him most agreeably what a novice he was in music. He also illuminated finely, but could not write so beautifully as Gerard. Comparing their acquirements with the earnestness and simplicity of an age in which accomplishments implied a true natural bent, Youth and Age soon became like brothers, and Gerard was pressed hard to stay that night. He consulted Denys, who assented with a rueful shrug.

Gerard told his old new friend whither he was going, and described their late adventures, softening down the bolster.

'Alack!' said the good old man, 'I have been a great traveller in my day, but none molested me.' He then told him to avoid inns, — they were always haunted by rogues and roysterers, whence his soul might take harm even did his body escape, — and to manage each day's journey so as to lie at some peaceful monastery; then suddenly breaking off and looking as sharp as a needle at Gerard, he asked him how long since he had been shriven?

Gerard coloured up, and replied feebly, 'Better than a fortnight.'

'And thou an exorcist! No wonder perils have overtaken thee. Come, thou must be assoiled out of hand.'

'Yes, father,' said Gerard, 'and with all mine heart,' and was sinking down to his knees, with his hands joined.

But the monk stopped him half fretfully. 'Not to me! not to me! not to me! I am as full of the world as thou or any he that lives in 't. My whole soul, it is in these wooden pipes and sorry leathern stops, which shall perish — with them whose minds are fixed on suchlike vanities.'

'Dear father,' said Gerard, 'they are for the use of the Church; and surely that sanctifies the pains and labour spent on them?'

'That is just what the devil has been whispering in mine ear this while,' said the monk, putting one hand behind his back and shaking his finger half threateningly, half playfully, at Gerard; 'he was even so kind and thoughtful as to mind me that Solomon built the Lord a house with rare hangings, and that this in him was counted gracious and no sin. Oh, he can quote Scripture rarely. But I am not so simple a monk as you think, my lad,' cried the good father with sudden defiance, addressing not Gerard but — vacancy. 'This one toy finished, vigils, fasts, and prayers for me, — prayers standing, prayers lying on the chapel floor, and prayers in a right good tub of cold water.' He nudged Gerard, and winked his eye knowingly. 'Nothing he hates and dreads like seeing us monks at our orisons up to our chins in cold water; for *corpus domat aqua.* So now go confess thy little trumpery sins, pardonable in youth and secularity, and leave me to mine, sweet to me as honey, and to be expiated in proportion.'

Gerard bowed his head, but could not help saying, 'Where shall I find a confessor more holy and clement?'

'In each of these cells,' replied the monk, simply (they were now in the corridor); 'there, go to Brother Anselm, yonder.'

Gerard followed the monk's direction and made for a cell. But the doors were pretty close to one another, and it seems he mistook; for just as he was about to tap, he heard his old friend crying to him in an agitated whisper, 'Nay! nay! nay!' He turned, and there was the monk at his cell door in a strange state of anxiety, going up and down and beating the air double-handed, like a bottom sawyer. Gerard really thought the cell he was at must be inhabited by some dangerous wild beast, if not by that personage whose presence in the convent had been so distinctly proclaimed. He looked back inquiringly, and went on to the next door. Then his old friend nodded his head rapidly, bursting in a moment into a comparatively blissful expression of face, and shot back into his den. He took his hour-glass, turned it, and went to work on his regalles; and often he looked up, and said to himself, 'Well-a-day! the sands how swift they run when the man is bent over earthly toys.'

Father Anselm was a venerable monk, with an ample head, and a face all dignity and love.

'Plait-il?'

'Well, then; Denys, you are a veteran, you know. How often have I heard you say it!'

'And who gainsays it? Twelve years' hard service, mort du diable!'

'And in age you are eight-and-twenty.'

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leeches say 't is from timidity and want of skill; but, in sooth, we have long found that simples will cure most of the ills that can be cured at all. Besides, they never kill in capable hands; and other remedies slay like thunderbolts. As for the blood, the Vulgate saith expressly it is "the life of a man." And in medicine or law, as in divinity, to be wiser than the All-wise is to be a fool. Moreover, simples are mighty. The little four-footed creature that kills the poisonous snake, if bitten herself, finds an herb powerful enough to quell that poison, though stronger and of swifter operation than any mortal malady; and we, taught by her wisdom and our own traditions, still search and try the virtues of those plants the good God hath strewed this earth with, — some to feed men's bodies, some to heal them. Only in desperate ills we mix heavenly with earthly virtue. We steep the hair or the bones of some dead saint in the medicine, and thus work marvellous cures.'

'Think you, father, it is along of the reliques? For Peter à Floris, a learned leech and no pagan, denies it stoutly.'

'What knows Peter à Floris? And what know I? I take not on me to say we can command the saints, and will they nill they, can

draw corporal virtue from their blest remains; but I see that the patient drinking thus in faith is often bettered as by a charm. Doubtless faith in the recipient is for much in all these cures. But so 't was ever. A sick woman that all the Jewish leeches failed to cure did but touch Christ's garment and was healed in a moment. Had she not touched that sacred piece of cloth she had never been healed. Had she without faith not touched it only, but worn it to her grave, I trow she had been none the better for 't. But we do ill to search these things too curiously. All we see around us calls for faith. Have then a little patience! We shall soon know all. Meantime, I, thy confessor for the nonce, do strictly forbid thee on thy soul's health to hearken learned lay folk on things religious. Arrogance is their bane; with it they shut heaven's open door in their own faces. Mind I say learned laics. Unlearned ones have often been my masters in humility, and may be thine. Thy wound is cared for; in three days 't will be but a scar. And now God speed thee, and the saints make thee as good and as happy as thou art beautiful and gracious.' Gerard hoped there was no need to part yet; for he was to dine in the refectory. But Father Anselm told him, with a shade of

regret just perceptible and no more, that he did not leave his cell this week, being himself in penitence; and with this he took Gerard's head delicately in both hands, and kissed him on the brow, and almost before the cell door had closed on him, was back to his pious offices.

Gerard went away chilled to the heart by the isolation of the monastic life, and saddened too. 'Alas!' he thought, 'here is a kind face I must never look to see again on earth; a kind voice gone from mine ear and my heart forever. There is nothing but meeting and parting in this sorrowful world. Well-a-day! well-a-day!'

This pensive mood was interrupted by a young monk who came for him and took him to the refectory; there he found several monks seated at a table, and Denys standing like a poker, being examined as to the towns he should pass through. The friars then clubbed their knowledge, and marked out the route, noting all the religious houses on or near that road; and this they gave Gerard. Then supper; and after it the old monk carried Gerard to his cell, and they had an eager chat, and the friar incidentally revealed the cause of his pantomime in the corridor. 'Ye had well-nigh fallen into Brother Jerome's clutches. Yon was his cell.'

'Is Father Jerome an ill man, then?'

'An ill man?' and the friar crossed himself; 'a saint, an anchorite, the very pillar of this house! He had sent ye barefoot to Loretto. Nay, I forgot, y'are bound for Italy; the spiteful old — saint upon earth had sent ye to Canterbury or Compostella. But Jerome was born old and with a cowl. Anselm and I were boys once, and wicked beyond anything you can imagine.' Gerard wore a somewhat incredulous look. 'This keeps us humble more or less, and makes us reasonably lenient to youth and hot blood.'

Then, at Gerard's earnest request, one more heavenly strain upon the psalterion, and so to bed, the troubled spirit calmed, and the sore heart soothed.

I have described in full this day, marked only by contrast, — a day that came like oil on waves after so many passions and perils, — because it must stand in this narrative as the representative of many such days which now succeeded to it; for our travellers on their weary way experienced that which most of my readers will find in the longer journey of life; namely, that stirring events are not evenly distributed over the whole road, but come by fits and starts, and, as it

were, in clusters. To some extent this may be because they draw one another by links more or less subtle. But there is more in it than that. It happens so. Life is an intermittent fever. Now, all narrators, whether of history or fiction, are compelled to slur these barren portions of time — or else line trunks. The practice, however, tends to give the unguarded reader a wrong arithmetical impression, which there is a particular reason for avoiding in these pages as far as possible. I invite therefore your intelligence to my aid, and ask you to try and realize that, although there were no more vivid adventures for a long while, one day's march succeeded another, one monastery after another fed and lodged them gratis with a welcome always charitable, sometimes genial; and though they met no enemy but winter and rough weather, — antagonists not always contemptible, — yet they trudged over a much larger tract of territory than that, their passage through which I have described so minutely. And so the pair, Gerard bronzed in the face and travel-stained from head to foot, and Denys with his shoes in tatters, stiff and footsore both of them, drew near the Burgundian frontier.

CHAPTER IV.

GERARD was almost as eager for this promised land as Denys; for the latter constantly chanted its praises, and at every little annoyance showed him 'they did things better in Burgundy;' and, above all, played on his foible by guaranteeing clean bed-clothes at the inns of that polished nation. 'I ask no more,' the Hollander would say. 'To think that I have not lain once in a naked bed since I left home! When I look at their linen, instead of doffing habit and hose, it is mine eyes and nose I would fain be shut of.'

Denys carried his love of country so far as to walk twenty leagues in shoes that had exploded, rather than buy of a German churl who would throw all manner of obstacles in a customer's way, — his incivility, his dinner, his body.

Toward sunset they found themselves at equal distances from a little town and a monastery, only the latter was off the road. Denys was for the inn, Gerard for the convent. Denys

gave way, but on condition that, once in Burgundy, they should always stop at an inn. Gerard consented to this, the more readily that his chart with its list of convents ended here. So they turned off the road. And now Gerard asked with surprise whence this sudden aversion to places that had fed and lodged them gratis so often. The soldier hemm'd and hawed at first; but at last his wrongs burst forth. It came out that this was no sudden aversion but an ancient and abiding horror, which he had suppressed till now, but with infinite difficulty, and out of politeness: 'I saw they had put powder in your drink,' said he, 'so I forbore them. However, being the last, why not ease my mind? Know, then, I have been like a fish out of water in all those great dungeons. You straightway levant with some old shaveling, so you see not my purgatory.'

'Forgive me! I have been selfish.'

'Ay, ay, I forgive thee, little one; 't is not thy fault; art not the first fool that has been priest-rid and monk-bit. But I 'll not forgive *them* my misery.' Then, about a century before Henry VIII.'s commissioners, he delivered his indictment: These gloomy piles were all built alike. Inns differed; but here all was monotony. Great gate, little gate, so many

steps and then a gloomy cloister. Here the dortour; there the great cold refectory, where you must sit mumchance, or at least inaudible, — he who liked to speak his mind out. 'And then,' said he, 'nobody is a man here, but all are slaves, — and of what? Of a peevish, tinkling bell, that never sleeps. An 't were a trumpet now, aye sounding alarums, 't would n't freeze a man's heart so. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, and you must sit to meat with maybe no stomach for food. Ere your meat settles in your stomach, tinkle, tinkle, and ye must to church with maybe no stomach for devotion. I am not a hog at prayers, for one. Tinkle, tinkle, and now you must to bed with your eyes open. Well, by then you have contrived to shut them, some uneasy imp of darkness has got to the bell-rope, and tinkle, tinkle, it behooves you say a prayer in the dark, whether you know one or not. If they heard the sort of prayers I mutter when they break my rest with their tinkle! Well, you drop off again and get about an eyeful of sleep: lo! it is tinkle, tinkle, for matins.'

'And the only clapper you love is a woman's,' put in Gerard, half contemptuously.

'Because there is some music in that even when it scolds,' was the stout reply. 'And

then to be always checked. If I do but put my finger in the salt-cellar, straightway I hear, "Have you no knife that you finger the salt?" And if I but wipe my knife on the cloth to save time, then 't is, "Wipe thy knife dirty on the bread, and clean upon the cloth!" O small of soul! these little peevish pedantries fall chill upon good-fellowship like wee icicles a-melting down from strawen eaves.'

'I hold cleanliness no pedantry,' said Gerard. 'Shouldst learn better manners once for all.'

'Nay. 'T is they who lack manners. They stop a fellow's mouth at every word.'

'At every other word, you mean; every obscene or blasphemous one.'

'Exaggerator, go to! Why, at the very last of these dungeons I found the poor travellers sitting all chilled and mute round one shaveling, like rogues awaiting their turn to be hanged; so to cheer them up, I did but cry out, "Courage, tout le monde, le dia—"'

'Connu! what befell?'

'Marry, this. "Blaspheme not!" quo' the bourreau. "Plait-il," say I. Does n't he wheel and wyte on me in a sort of Alsatian French, turning all the *p*'s into *b*'s. I had much ado not to laugh in his face.'

'Being thyself unable to speak ten words of *his* language without a fault.'

'Well, all the world ought to speak French. What avails so many jargons, except to put a frontier atwixt men's hearts?'

'But what said he?'

'What signifies it what a fool says?'

'Oh, not all the words of a fool are folly, or I should not listen to you.'

'Well, then, he said, "Such as begin by making free with the devil's name, aye end by doing it with all the names in heaven." "Father," said I, "I am a soldier, and this is but my *consigne* or watchword." "Oh, then, it is just a custom?" said he. I, not divining the old fox, and thinking to clear myself, said, "Ay, it was." "Then that is ten times worse," said he. "'T will bring him about your ears one of these days. He still comes where he hears his name often called." Observe! no gratitude for the tidings which neither his missals nor his breviary had ever let him know. Then he was so good as to tell me soldiers do commonly the crimes for which all other men are broke on the wheel, — à savoir, murder, rape, and pillage.'

'And is 't not true?'

'True or not, it was ill manners,' replied

Denys, guardedly. 'And so says this courteous host of mine, "Being the foes of mankind, why make enemies of good spirits into the bargain, by still shouting the names of evil ones?" and a lot more stuff.'

'Well, but, Denys, whether you hearken his rede or slight it, wherefore blame a man for raising his voice to save your soul?'

'How can his voice save my soul, when a keeps turning of his *p*'s into *b*'s?'

Gerard was staggered. Ere he could recover at this thunderbolt of Gallicism, Denys went triumphant off at a tangent, and stigmatized all monks as hypocrites. 'Do but look at them, how they creep about and cannot eye you like honest men.'

'Nay,' said Gerard, eagerly, 'that modest downcast gaze is part of their discipline; 't is *custodia oculorum*.'

'Cussed toads eating hoc hac horum? No such thing; just so looks a cut-purse. Can't meet a true man's eye. Doff cowl, monk, and behold! a thief. Don cowl, thief, and lo! a monk. Tell me not they will ever be able to look God Almighty in the face, when they can't even look a true man in the face down here. Ah, here it is, black as ink! into the well we go, comrade. Miséricorde! there goes

the tinkle already. 'T is the best of tinkles though; 't is for dinner. Stay, listen! I thought so; the wolf in my stomach cried "Amen!"' This last statement he confirmed with two oaths, and marched like a victorious gamecock into the convent, thinking by Gerard's silence he had convinced him, and not dreaming how profoundly he had disgusted him.

CHAPTER V.

IN the refectory allusion was made at the table where Gerard sat to the sudden death of the monk who had undertaken to write out fresh copies of the charter of the monastery, and the rule, etc.

Gerard caught this, and timidly offered his services. There was a hesitation which he mistook. 'Nay, not for hire, my lords, but for love, and as a trifling return for many a good night's lodging the brethren of your order have bestowed on me a poor wayfarer.'

A monk smiled approvingly, but hinted that the late brother was an excellent penman, and his work could not be continued but by a master. Gerard, on this, drew from his wallet with some trepidation a vellum deed, the back of which he had cleaned and written upon by way of specimen. The monk gave quite a start at sight of it, and very hastily went up the hall to the high table, and bending his knee so as just to touch in passing the fifth step and the

tenth, or last, presented it to the prior with comments. Instantly a dozen knowing eyes were fixed on it, and a buzz of voices was heard; and soon Gerard saw the prior point more than once, and the monk came back, looking as proud as Punch, with a savory crustade ryal, or game pie, gravied and spiced, for Gerard, and a silver grace cup full of rich pimentum. This latter Gerard took, and bowing low, first to the distant prior, then to his own company, quaffed and circulated the cup.

Instantly, to his surprise, the whole table hailed him as a brother: 'Art convent-bred; deny it not.' He acknowledged it, and gave Heaven thanks for it; for otherwise he had been as rude and ignorant as his brothers, Sybrandt and Cornelis. 'But 't is passing strange how you could know,' said he.

'You drank with the cup in both hands,' said two monks, speaking together.

The voices had for some time been loudish round a table at the bottom of the hall; but presently came a burst of mirth so obstreperous and prolonged that the prior sent the very sub-prior all down the hall to check it, and inflict penance on every monk at the table. And Gerard's cheek burned with shame; for in the

heart of the unruly merriment his ear had caught the word 'courage!' and the trumpet tones of Denys of Burgundy.

Soon Gerard was installed in *feu* Werter's cell, with wax lights, and a little frame that could be set at any angle, and all the materials of caligraphy. The work, however, was too much for one evening. Then came the question, how could he ask Denys, the monk-hater, to stay longer? However, he told him, and offered to abide by his decision. He was agreeably surprised when Denys said, graciously, 'A day's rest will do neither of us harm. Write thou, and I 'll pass the time as I may.'

Gerard's work was vastly admired; they agreed that the records of the monastery had gained by poor Werter's death. The sub-prior forced a rix-dollar on Gerard, and several brushes and colours out of the convent stock, which was very large. He resumed his march warm at heart; for this was of good omen, since it was on the pen he relied to make his fortune and recover his well-beloved.

'Come, Denys,' said he, good-humouredly, 'see what the good monks have given me. Now, do try to be fairer to them; for to be round with you, it chilled my friendship for a

moment to hear even you call my benefactors "hypocrites."'

'I recant,' said Denys.

'Thank you, thank you, good Denys!'

'I was a scurrilous vagabond.'

'Nay, nay, say not so, neither!'

'But we soldiers are rude and hasty. I give myself the lie, and I offer those I misunderstood all my esteem. 'Tis unjust that thousands should be defamed for the hypocrisy of a few.'

'Now are you reasonable. You have pondered what I said?'

'Nay, it is their own doing.'

Gerard crowed a little (we all like to be proved in the right), and was all attention when Denys offered to relate how his conversion was effected.

'Well, then, at dinner the first day a young monk beside me did open his jaws and laughed right out most musically. "Good," said I; "at last I have fallen on a man and not a shorn ape." So, to sound him further, I slapped his broad back and administered my consigne. "Heaven forbid!" says he. I stared; for the dog looked as sad as Solomon. A better mime saw you never, even at a Mystery. "I se war is no sharpener of the wits," said

"What are the clergy for but to fight the foul fiend; and what else are monks for?

> The fiend being dead,
> The friars are spent.

You may plough up the convents, and we poor monks shall have bought to do but turn soldiers, and so bring him to life again." Then there was a great laugh at my expense. "Well, you are the monk for me," said I. "And you are the crossbow-man for me," quoth he. "And I'll be bound you could tell us tales of the war should make our hair stand on end." "Excuse! the barber has put that out of question," quoth I; and then I had the laugh."

"What wretched ribaldry!" observed Gerard, pensively.

The candid Denys at once admitted he had seen merrier jests hatched with less cackle. "'T was a great matter to have got rid of hypocrisy. "So," said I, "I can give you the *chaire de poule*, if that may content ye." "That we will see," was the cry; and a signal went round."

Denys then related, bursting with glee, how at bedtime he had been taken to a cell instead of the great dortour, and strictly forbidden to sleep; and, to aid his vigil, a book had been

lent him of pictures representing a hundred merry adventures of monks in pursuit of the female laity: and how in due course he had been taken out barefooted and down to the parlour, where was a supper fit for the duke, and at it twelve jolly friars, the roaringest boys he had ever met in peace or war: how the story, the toast, the jest, the wine cup had gone round, and some had played cards with a gorgeous pack, where Saint Theresa, and Saint Catharine, etc., bedizened with gold, stood for the four queens; and black, white, gray, and crutched friars for the four knaves; and had staked their very rosaries, swearing like troopers when they lost: and how about midnight a sly monk had stolen out, but had by him and others been as cannily followed into the garden, and seen to thrust his hand into the ivy and out with a rope-ladder; with this he had run up on the wall, which was ten feet broad, yet not so nimbly but what a russet kirtle had popped up from the outer world as quick as he, and so to billing and cooing: that this situation had struck him as rather feline than ecclesiastical, and drawn from him the appropriate comment of a 'mew!' the monks had joined the mewsical chorus, and the lay visitor shrieked and been sore discomforted; but Abelard only cried,

"What are the clergy for but to fight the foul fiend? and what else are monks for?

'The fiend being dead,
The friars are sped.'

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'What, are ye there, ye jealous miauling knaves? Ye shall caterwaul to some tune to-morrow night. I 'll fit every man-jack of ye with a fardingale:' that this brutal threat had reconciled him to stay another day, at Gerard's request.

Gerard groaned.

Meantime, unable to disconcert so brazen a monk, and the demoiselle beginning to whimper, they had danced caterwauling in a circle, then bestowed a solemn benediction on the two wallflowers, and off to the parlour, where they found a pair lying dead drunk, and other two affectionate to tears. That they had straightway carried off the inanimate, and dragged off the loving and lachrymose, kicked them all merrily each into his cell, —

'And so shut up in measureless content.'

Gerard was disgusted; and said so.

Denys chuckled, and proceeded to tell him how the next day he and the young monks had drawn the fish-ponds and secreted much pike, carp, tench, and eel, for their own use; and how in the dead of night he had been taken shoeless by crooked ways into the chapel, a ghostlike place, being dark, and then down some steps into a crypt below the chapel floor, where suddenly paradise had burst on him.

''Tis there the holy fathers retire to pray,' put in Gerard.

'Not always,' said Denys. 'Wax candles by the dozen were lighted, and princely cheer; fifteen soups maigre, with marvellous twangs of venison, grouse, and hare in them, and twenty different fishes (being Friday), cooked with wondrous art, and each he between two buxom lasses, and each lass between two lads with a cowl, — all but me; and to think I had to woo by interpreter. I doubt the knave put in three words for himself and one for me; if he did n't, hang him for a fool. And some of the weaker vessels were novices, and not wont to hold good wine; had to be coaxed ere they would put it to their white teeth; mais elles s'y faisaient. And the story, and the jest, and the cup went round (by-the-by they had flagons made to simulate breviaries); and a monk touched the cittern, and sang ditties with a voice tunable as a lark in spring. The posies did turn the faces of the women-folk bright red at first; but elles s'y faisaient.'

Here Gerard exploded. 'Miserable wretches! Corrupters of youth! Perverters of innocence! But for you being there, Denys, who have been taught no better, oh, would God the church had

fallen on the whole gang. Impious, abominable hypocrites!'

'Hypocrites?' cried Denys, with unfeigned surprise. 'Why, that is what I 'clept them ere I knew them, and you withstood me. Nay, they are sinners,—all good fellows are that; but, by Saint Denys his helmeted skull, no hypocrites, but right jolly roaring blades.'

'Denys,' said Gerard, solemnly, 'you little know the peril you ran that night. That church you defiled amongst you is haunted; I had it from one of the elder monks. The dead walk there; their light feet have been heard to patter o'er the stones.'

'Miséricorde!' whispered Denys.

'Ay, more,' said Gerard, lowering his voice almost to a whisper; 'celestial sounds have issued from the purlieus of that very crypt you turned into a tavern. Voices of the dead holding unearthly communion have chilled the ear of midnight. And at times, Denys, the faithful in their nightly watches have even heard music from dead lips; and chords, made by no mortal finger, swept by no mortal hand, have rung faintly, like echoes, deep among the dead in those sacred vaults.'

Denys wore a look of dismay. 'Ugh! if I had known, mules and wain-ropes had not hauled

me thither; and so' — with a sigh — 'I had lost a merry time.'

Whether further discussion might have thrown any more light upon these ghostly sounds, who can tell? for up came a 'bearded brother' from the monastery, spurring his mule, and waving a piece of vellum in his hand. It was the deed between Ghysbrecht and Floris Brandt. Gerard valued it deeply as a remembrance of home. He turned pale at first but to think he had so nearly lost it, and to Denys's infinite amusement not only gave a piece of money to the lay brother, but kissed the mule's nose.

'I 'll read you now,' said Gerard, 'were you twice as ill written, and to make sure of never losing you —' Here he sat down, and taking out needle and thread sewed it with feminine dexterity to his doublet, and his mind and heart and soul were away to Sevenbergen.

They reached the promised land, and Denys, who was in high spirits, doffed his bonnet to all the women, who courtesied and smiled in return; fired his *consigne* at most of the men, at which some stared, some grinned, some both; and finally landed his friend at one of the long-promised Burgundian inns.

'It is a little one,' said he, 'but I know it of old for a good one, — Les Trois Poissons. But

what is this writ up? I mind not this;' and he pointed to an inscription that ran across the whole building in a single line of huge letters. 'Oh, I see. "Ici on loge à pied et à cheval,"' said Denys, going minutely through the inscription, and looking bumptious when he had effected it.

Gerard did look, and the sentence in question ran thus: —

'On ne loge céans à crédit: ce bonhomme est mort, les mauvais paieurs l'ont tué.'

CHAPTER VI.

THEY met the landlord in the passage.

'Welcome, messieurs,' said he, taking off his cap with a low bow.

'Come, we are not in Germany,' said Gerard.

In the public room they found the mistress, a buxom woman of forty. She courtesied to them and smiled right cordially. 'Give yourself the trouble of sitting ye down, fair sir,' said she to Gerard, and dusted two chairs with her apron, not that they needed it.

'Thank you, dame,' said Gerard. — 'Well,' thought he, 'this *is* a polite nation. The trouble of sitting down? That will I with singular patience; and presently the labour of eating, also the toil of digestion, and finally, by Hercules his aid, the strain of going to bed, and the struggle of sinking fast asleep. — Why, Denys, what are you doing? Ordering supper for only two?'

'Why not?'

'What! can we sup without waiting for forty more? Burgundy forever!'

'Aha! Courage, camarade, le dia—'

'C'est convenu.'

The salique law seemed not to have penetrated to French inns. In this one, at least, wimple and kirtle reigned supreme; doublets and hose were few in number and feeble in act. The landlord himself wandered objectless, eternally taking off his cap to folk for want of thought; and the women, as they passed him in turn, thrust him quietly aside without looking at him, as we remove a live twig in bustling through a wood.

A maid brought in supper, and the mistress followed her empty handed.

'Fall to, my masters,' said she, cheerily. 'Y' have but one enemy here; and he lies under your knife.' I shrewdly suspect this of formula.

They fell to. The mistress drew her chair a little toward the table, and provided company as well as meat; gossiped genially with them like old acquaintances. But, this form gone through, the busy dame was soon off, and sent in her daughter,—a beautiful young woman of about twenty,—who took the vacant seat. She was not quite so broad and genial as the elder, but gentle and cheerful, and showed a womanly tenderness for Gerard on learning the distance

the poor boy had come, and had to go. She stayed nearly half an hour; and when she left them, Gerard said, 'This an inn? Why, it is like home.'

'Qui fit François il fit courtois,' said Denys, bursting with gratified pride.

'Courteous? nay, Christian, to welcome us like home guests and old friends, — us vagrants, here to-day and gone to-morrow. But indeed who better merits pity and kindness than the worn traveller far from his folk? Holà! here 's another.'

The new comer was the chambermaid, — a woman of about twenty-five, with a cocked nose, a large, laughing mouth and a sparkling black eye, and a bare arm, very stout, but not very shapely.

The moment she came in, one of the travellers passed a somewhat free jest on her; the next, the whole company were roaring at his expense, so swiftly had her practised tongue done his business, — even as in a passage of arms between a novice and a master of fence, foils clash; novice pinked. On this another, and then another, must break a lance with her; but Marion stuck her great arms upon her haunches, and held the whole room in play.

This country girl possessed in perfection that

rude and ready humour which looks mean and vulgar on paper, but carries all before it spoken, — not wit's rapier; its bludgeon. Nature had done much for her in this way, and daily practice in an inn the rest. Yet shall she not be photographed by me, but feebly indicated; for it was just four hundred years ago, the raillery was coarse, she returned every stroke in kind, and, though a virtuous woman, said things without winking, which no decent man of our day would say even among men.

Gerard sat gaping with astonishment. This was to him almost a new variety of 'that interesting species,' *homo*. He whispered Denys, 'Now I see why you Frenchmen say "a woman's tongue is her sword."' Just then she levelled another assailant; and the chivalrous Denys, to console and support 'the weaker vessel,' — the iron kettle among the clay pots, — administered his *consigne*, 'Courage, ma mie, le — ' etc.

She turned on him directly. 'How can *he* be dead as long as there is an archer left alive?' General laughter at her ally's expense.

'It is "washing-day," my masters,' said she, with sudden gravity.

'Après? We travellers cannot strip and go bare while you wash our clothes,' objected a

peevish old fellow by the fireside, who had kept mumchance during the raillery, but crept out into the sunshine of commonplaces.

'I aimed not your way, ancient man,' replied Marion, superciliously. 'But, *since you ask me*' (here she scanned him slowly from head to foot), 'I trow you might take a turn in the tub, clothes and all, and no harm done.' (Laughter.) 'But what I spoke for, I thought this young sire might like his beard starched.'

Poor Gerard's turn had come. His chin crop was thin and silky.

The loudest of all the laughers this time was the traitor Denys, whose beard was of a good length, and singularly stiff and bristly; so that Shakspeare, though he never saw him, hit him in the bull's eye: —

'Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard.'
As You Like It.

Gerard bore the Amazonian satire mighty calmly. He had little personal vanity. 'Nay, chambrière,' said he, with a smile, 'mine is all unworthy your pains. Take you this fair growth in hand!' and he pointed to Denys's vegetable.

'Oh, time for that when I starch the besoms.'

While they were all shouting over this palpable hit, the mistress returned; and in no more

time than it took her to cross the threshold, did our Amazon turn to a seeming Madonna meek and mild.

Mistresses are wonderful subjugators. Their like, I think, breathes not on the globe. Housemaids, decide! It was a waste of histrionic ability though; for the landlady had heard, and did not at heart disapprove, the peals of laughter.

'Ah, Marion, lass,' said she, good-humouredly, 'if you laid me an egg every time you cackle, Les Trois Poissons would never lack an omelet.'

'Now, dame,' said Gerard, 'what is to pay?'

'What for?'

'Our supper.'

'Where is the hurry? Cannot you be content to pay when you go? Lose the guest, find the money, is the rule of The Three Fish.'

'But, dame, outside The Three Fish it is thus written: "Ici on ne loge—"'

'Bah! Let that flea stick on the wall! Look hither,' and she pointed to the smoky ceiling, which was covered with hieroglyphics. These were accounts, vulgo scores, intelligible to this dame and her daughter, who wrote them at need by simply mounting a low stool, and scratching with a knife so as to show lines of

ceiling through the deposit of smoke. The dame explained that the writing on the wall was put there to frighten moneyless folk from the inn altogether, or to be acted on at odd times when a nonpaying face should come in and insist on being served. 'We can't refuse them plump, you know. The law forbids us.'

'And how know you mine is not such a face?'

'Out! fie! it is the best face that has entered The Three Fish this autumn.'

'And mine, dame?' said Denys; 'dost see no knavery here?'

She eyed him calmly. 'Not such a good one as the lad's, nor ever will be; but it is the face of a true man. For all that,' added she, dryly, 'an I were ten years younger, I 'd as lieve not meet that face on a dark night too far from home.'

Gerard stared. Denys laughed. 'Why, dame, I would but sip the night dew off the flower; and you need n't take ten years off, nor ten days, to be worth risking a scratched face for.'

'There, our mistress,' said Marion, who had just come in, 'said I not t' other day, you could make a fool of them still, an if you were properly minded?'

'I dare say ye did. It sounds like some daft wench's speech.'

'Dame,' said Gerard, 'this is wonderful.'

'What? Oh, no, no; that is no wonder at all. Why, I have been here all my life; and reading faces is the first thing a girl picks up in an inn.'

Marion. 'And frying eggs the second; no, telling lies. Frying eggs is the third, though.'

The Mistress. 'And holding her tongue the last; and modesty the day after never at all.'

Marion. 'Alack! Talk of *my* tongue. But I say no more. She, under whose wing I live, now deals the blow. I 'm sped; 't is but a chambermaid gone. Catch what 's left on 't!' and she staggered and sank backward on to the handsomest fellow in the room, which happened to be Gerard.

'Tic! tic!' cried he, peevishly; 'there, don't be stupid! That is too heavy a jest for me. See you not I am talking to the mistress?'

Marion resumed her elasticity with a grimace, made two little bounds into the middle of the floor, and there turned a pirouette. 'There, mistress,' said she, 'I give in; 't is you that reigns supreme with the men, — leastways with male children.'

'Young man,' said the mistress, 'this girl is not so stupid as her deportment. In reading of faces and frying of omelets, there we are great. 'T would be hard if we failed at these arts, since they are about all we do know.'

'You do not quite take me, dame,' said Gerard. 'That honesty in a face should shine forth to your experienced eye, that seems reasonable; but how by looking on Denys here could you learn his one little foible, his insanity, his miserable mulierosity?' Poor Gerard got angrier the more he thought of it.

'His mule — His what?' — crossing herself with superstitious awe at the polysyllable.

'Nay, 't is but the word I was fain to invent for him.'

'Invent? What! can a child like you make other words than grow in Burgundy by nature? Take heed what ye do! Why, we are overrun with them already, especially bad ones. Lord, these be times! I look to hear of a new thistle invented next.'

'But, dame, I found language too poor to paint him. I was fain to invent. You know Necessity is the mother of —'

'Ay, ay; that is old enough, o' conscience.'

'Well, then, dame, *mulierose*, — that means wrapped up, body and soul, in women. So,

prithee, tell me; how did you ever detect the noodle's mulierosity?'

'Alas! good youth, you make a mountain of a molehill. We that are women be notice-takers; and out of the tail of our eye see more than most men can, glaring through a prospect glass. Whiles I move to and fro doing this and that, my glance is still on my guests; and I did notice that this soldier's eyes were never off the women-folk, — my daughter, or Marion, or even an old woman like me, all was gold to him, — and there a sat glowering. Oh, you foolish, foolish man! Now, *you* still turned to the speaker, her or him; and that is common sense.'

Denys burst into a hoarse laugh. 'You never were more out. Why, this silky, smooth-faced companion is a very Turk, — all but his beard. He is what-d'-ye-call-'em oser than e'er an archer in the duke's body-guard. He is more wrapped up in one single Dutch lass called Margaret than I am in the whole bundle of ye brown and fair.'

'Man alive, that is just the contrary,' said the hostess. 'Yourn is the bane, and hisn the cure. Cling you still to Margaret, my dear. I hope she is an honest girl.'

'Dame, she is an angel.'

'Ay, ay; they are all that till better acquainted. I 'd as lieve have her no more than honest, and then she will serve to keep you out of worse company. As for you, soldier, there is trouble in store for you. Your eyes were never made for the good of your soul.'

'Nor of his pouch, either,' said Marion, striking in; 'and his lips they will sip the dew, as he calls it, off many a bramble-bush.'

'Overmuch clack, Marion; overmuch clack!'

'Ods-bodikins, mistress; ye did n't hire me to be one o' your three fishes, did ye?' and Marion sulked thirty seconds.

'Is that the way to speak to our mistress?' remonstrated the landlord, who had slipped in.

'Hold your whisht,' said his wife, sharply. 'It is not your business to check the girl; she is a good servant to you.'

'What! is the cock never to crow, and the hens at it all day?'

'You can crow as loud as you like, my man, — out o' doors; but the hen means to rule the roost.'

'I know a byword to that tune,' said Gerard.

'Do ye, now? Out wi' t then.'

'"Femme veut en toute saison,
Estre dame en sa maison."'

'I never heard it afore, but 't is as sooth as gospel. Ay; they that set these bywords a rolling had eyes and tongues, and tongues and eyes. Before all the world, give me an old saw.'

'And me a young husband,' said Marion. 'Now, there was a chance for you all, and nobody spoke. Oh, it is too late now! I've changed my mind.'

'All the better for some poor fellow,' suggested Denys.

And now the arrival of the young mistress, or, as she was called, the little mistress, was the signal for them all to draw round the fire, like one happy family, — travellers, host, hostess, and even servants in the outer ring, — and tell stories till bedtime. And Gerard in his turn told a tremendous one out of his repertory, — a MS. collection of 'Acts of the Saints,' — and made them all shudder deliciously; but soon after began to nod, — exhausted by the effort, I should say. The young mistress saw, and gave Marion a look. She instantly lighted a rush, and laying her hand on Gerard's shoulder, invited him to follow her. She showed him a room where were two nice white beds, and bade him choose. 'Either is paradise,' said he. 'I 'll take this one. Do you know, I have not

lain in a naked bed once since I left my home in Holland.'

'Alack! poor soul,' said she. 'Well then, the sooner my flax and your down (he! he!) come together, the better; so — allons!' and she held out her cheek as business-like as if it had been her hand for a fee.

'Allons? What does that mean?'

'It means "good-night." Ahem! What! don't they salute the chambermaid in your part?'

'Not all in a moment.'

'What! do they make a business on 't?'

'Nay, perverter of words; I mean we make not so free with strange women.'

'They must be strange women if they do not think you strange fools then. Here is a coil. Why, all the old greasy graybeards that lie at our inn do kiss us chambermaids. Faugh! And what have we poor wretches to set on t' other side the compt, but now and then a nice young —? Alack! time flies. Chambermaids can't be spared long in the nursery; so how is 't to be?'

'An 't please you, arrange with my comrade for both. He is mulierose; I am not.'

'Nay, 't is the curb he will want, not the spur. Well! well! you shall to bed without paying the usual toll; and oh, but 't is sweet to

fall in with a young man who can withstand these ancient ill customs, and gainsay brazen hussies. Shalt have thy reward.'

'Thank you. But what are you doing with my bed?'

'Me? Oh, only taking off these sheets, and going to put on the pair the drunken miller slept in last night.'

'Oh, no! no! You cruel, black-hearted thing! There! there!'

'A la bonne heure! What will not perseverance effect? But note now the frowardness of a mad wench! I cared not for 't a button. I am dead sick of that sport this five years. But you denied me: so then forthwith I behooved to have it; belike had gone through fire and water for 't. Alas, young sir, we women are kittle cattle; poor perverse toads. Excuse us, and keep us in our place, — savoir, at arm's length! And so good-night.'

At the door she turned, and said with a complete change of tone and manner: 'The Virgin guard thy head, and the holy Evangelists watch the bed where lies a poor young wanderer far from home! Amen.'

And the next moment he heard her run tearing down the stairs, and soon a peal of laughter from the *salle* betrayed her whereabouts.

'Now, that is a character,' said Gerard, profoundly; and yawned over the discovery.

In a very few minutes he was in a dry bath of cold, clean linen, inexpressibly refreshing to him after so long disuse; then came a delicious glow; and then — Sevenbergen.

In the morning Gerard awoke infinitely refreshed, and was for rising, but found himself a close prisoner. His linen had vanished. Now, this was paralysis; for the night-gown is a recent institution. In Gerard's century, and indeed long after, men did not play fast and loose with clean sheets (when they could get them), but crept into them clothed with their innocence, like Adam; out of bed they seem to have taken most after his eldest son.

Gerard bewailed his captivity to Denys; but that instant the door opened, and in sailed Marion with their linen, newly washed and ironed, on her two arms, and set it down on the table.

'Oh, you good girl!' cried Gerard.

'Alack! have you found me out at last?'

'Yes, indeed. Is this another *custom?*'

'Nay, not to take them unbidden; but at night we aye question travellers, are they for linen washed. So I came in to you; but you

were both sound. Then said I to the little mistress, "La! where is the sense of waking wearied men t' ask them is Charles the Great dead, and would they liever carry foul linen or clean, especially this one with a skin like cream." "And so he has, I declare," said the young mistress.'

'That was me,' remarked Denys, with the air of a commentator.

'Guess once more and you 'll hit the mark.'

'Notice him not, Marion, he is an impudent fellow. And I am sure we cannot be grateful enough for your goodness; and I am sorry I ever refused you — anything you fancied you should like.'

'Oh, are ye there,' said *l'espiègle*. 'I take that to mean you would fain brush the morning dew off, as your bashful companion calls it. Well, then, excuse me. 'T is *customary*, but not prudent. I decline. Quits with you, lad.'

'Stop! stop!' cried Denys as she was making off victorious. 'I 'm curious to know how many of ye were here last night a-feasting your eyes on us twain.'

''T was so satisfactory a feast as we were n't half a minute over 't. Who? Why the big mistress, the little mistress, Janet and me, and

the whole *posse comitatus*, on tiptoe. We mostly make our rounds the last thing, not to get burned down, and in prodigious numbers. Somehow that maketh us bolder, especially where archers lie scattered about.'

'Why did not you tell me? I'd have lain awake.'

'Beau sire, the saying goes that the good and the ill are all one while their lids are closed. So we said, "Here is one who will serve God best asleep. Break not his rest!"'

'She is funny,' said Gerard, dictatorially.

'I must be either that or knavish.'

'How so?'

'Because The Three Fish pay me to be funny. You will eat before you part? Good! Then I'll go see the meat be fit for such worshipful teeth.'

'Denys!'

'What is your will?'

'I wish that was a great boy and going along with us to keep us cheery.'

'So do not I. But I wish it was going along with us as it is.'

'Now Heaven forefend! A fine fool you would make of yourself.'

They broke their fast, settled their score, and

said farewell. Then it was they found Marion had not exaggerated the 'custom of the country.' The three principal women took and kissed them right heartily, and they kissed the three principal women. The landlord took and kissed them, and they kissed the landlord; and the cry was, 'Come back,—the sooner the better!'

'Never pass The Three Fish. Should your purses be void, bring yourselves; "le sieur crédit" is not dead for you.'

And they took the road again.

They came to a little town, and Denys went to buy shoes. The shopkeeper was in the doorway, but wide awake. He received Denys with a bow down to the ground. The customer was soon fitted, and followed to the street, and dismissed with graceful salutes from the doorstep.

The friends agreed it was Elysium to deal with such a shoemaker as this. 'Not but what my German shoes have lasted well enough,' said Gerard the just.

Outside the town was a pebbled walk.

'This is to keep the burghers' feet dry, a-walking o' Sundays with their wives and daughters,' said Denys.

Those simple words of Denys, — one stroke

of a careless tongue, — painted 'home' in Gerard's heart. 'Oh, how sweet,' said he. 'Mercy! what is this? A gibbet; and ugh! two skeletons thereon. Oh, Denys, what a sorry sight to woo by!'

'Nay,' said Denys, 'a comfortable sight; for every rogue i' the air there is one the less a-foot.'

A little farther on they came to two pillars, and between these was a huge wheel closely studded with iron prongs; and entangled in these were bones and fragments of cloth miserably dispersed over the wheel.

Gerard hid his face in his hands. 'Oh, to think those patches and bones are all that is left of a man! Of one who was what we are now.'

'Excusez! A thing that went on two legs and stole: are we no more than that?'

'How know ye he stole? Have true men never suffered death and torture too?'

'None of my kith ever found the way to the gibbet, I know.'

'The better their luck. Prithee, how died the saints?'

'Hard. But not in Burgundy.'

'Ye massacred them wholesale at Lyons, and that is on Burgundy's threshold. To you the

gibbet proves the crime, because you read not story. Alas! had you stood on Calvary that bloody day we sigh for to this hour, I tremble to think you had perhaps shouted for joy at the gibbet builded there; for the cross was but the Roman gallows, Father Martin says.'

'The blaspheming old hound!'

'Oh, fie! fie! a holy and a book-learned man. Ay, Denys, y'had read them that suffered there by the bare light of the gibbet. "Drive in the nails!" y'had cried; "drive in the spear! Here be three malefactors; three roués." Yet of those little three one was the first Christian saint, and another was the Saviour of the world which gibbeted him.'

Denys assured him on his honour they managed things better in Burgundy. He added too, after profound reflection, that the horrors Gerard had alluded to had more than once made him curse and swear with rage when told by the good curé in his native village at Easter-tide; 'but they chanced in an outlandish nation, and near a thousand years agone. Mort de ma vie! let us hope it is not true, or at least sore exaggerated. Do but see how all tales gather as they roll!'

Then he reflected again, and all in a moment turned red with ire. 'Do ye not blush to play

with your book-craft on your unlettered friend, and throw dust in his eyes, evening the saints with these reptiles?'

Then suddenly he recovered his good humour. 'Since your heart beats for vermin, feel for the carrion crows! They be as good vermin as these. Would ye send them to bed supperless, poor pretty poppets? Why, these be their larder; the pangs of hunger would gnaw them dead, but for cold cut-purse hung up here and there.'

Gerard, who had for some time maintained a dead silence, informed him the subject was closed between them and forever. 'There are things,' said he, 'in which our hearts seem wide as the poles asunder, and eke our heads. But I love thee dearly all the same,' he added, with infinite grace and tenderness.

Toward afternoon they heard a faint wailing noise on ahead: it grew distincter as they proceeded. Being fast walkers they soon came up with its cause. A score of pikemen, accompanied by several constables, were marching along, and in advance of them was a herd of animals they were driving. These creatures, in number rather more than a hundred, were of various ages, only very few were downright old. The males were downcast and silent; it was

the females from whom all the outcry came. In other words, the animals thus driven along at the law's point were men and women.

'Good Heaven!' cried Gerard. 'What a band of them! But stay, surely all those children cannot be thieves: why, there are some in arms! What on earth is this, Denys?'

Denys advised him to ask that *bourgeois* with the badge. 'This is Burgundy; here a civil question ever draws a civil reply.'

Gerard went up to the officer, and removing his cap, — a civility which was immediately returned, — said, 'For our Lady's sake, sir, what do ye with these poor folk?'

'Nay, what is that to you, my lad?' replied the functionary, suspiciously.

'Master, I'm a stranger, and athirst for knowledge.'

'That is another matter. What are we doing? Ahem! Why we — Dost hear, Jacques? Here is a stranger seeks to know what we are doing;' and the two machines were tickled that there should be a man who did not know something they happened to know. In all ages this has tickled. However, the chuckle was brief, and moderated by their native courtesy, and the official turned to Gerard again. 'What we are doing? Hum!' and now he hesitated

not from any doubt as to what he was doing, but because he was hunting for a single word that should convey the matter. 'Ce que nous faisons, mon gars? Mais — dam — nous transvasons.'

'You decant? That should mean you pour from one vessel to another.'

'Precisely.'

He explained that last year the town of Charmes had been sore thinned by a pestilence, — whole houses emptied and trades short of hands; much ado to get in the rye, and the flax half spoiled. So the bailiff and aldermen had written to the duke's secretary; and the duke he sent far and wide to know what town was too full. 'That are we,' had the bailie of Toul writ back. 'Then send four or five score of your townsfolk,' was the order. 'Was not this to decant the full town into the empty? And is not the good duke the father of his people, and will not let the duchy be weakened, nor its fair towns laid waste by sword nor pestilence, but meets the one with pike and arbalest,' — touching his cap to the sergeant and Denys alternately, — 'and t' other with policy? Long live the duke!'

The pikemen of course were not to be outdone in loyalty; so they shouted with stento-

AVTRE NARAT

PHILIPPE II. surnommé le BON, Duc de Bourgoigne, de Lothier, Brab. de Limbourg, et de Luxembourg, Comte de Flandre, d'Arthois, de Bourgoigne, Haynaut, Hollande, Zelande, et de Namur, Marquis du S.t Empire, Sire de Frise et de Malines, Cousin germain du Precedent fils de IEAN sans POEVR et Nepueu D'ANTOINE de Bourgoigne, procreu CHARLES HARDI de sa femme ELISABETH, fille de IEAN Roy de Portugal. Il trespassa l'an [illegible] ensevely a Bruges et despuis transporté a Dijon en Bourgoigne.

P. Beaumont sculp.

rian lungs, 'Long live the duke!' Then the decanted ones, — partly because loyalty was a non-reasoning sentiment in those days, partly perhaps because they feared some further ill consequence should they alone be mute, — raised a feeble, tremulous shout: 'Long live the duke!'

But at this, insulted nature rebelled. Perhaps, indeed, the sham sentiment drew out the real; for on the very heels of that loyal noise, a loud and piercing wail burst from every woman's bosom and a deep, deep groan from every man's. Oh! the air filled in a moment with womanly and manly anguish. Judge what it must have been when the rude pikemen halted unbidden, all confused, as if a wall of sorrow had started up before them.

'En avant,' roared the sergeant, and they marched again, but muttering and cursing.

'Ah, the ugly sound,' said the civilian, wincing. 'Les malheureux!' cried he, ruefully; for where is the single man can hear the sudden agony of a multitude and not be moved? 'Les ingrats! They are going whence they were de trop to where they will be welcome, — from starvation to plenty, — and they object. They even make dismal noises. One would think we were thrusting them forth from Burgundy.'

Philipp the Good.

AVETRE NARAY.
PHILIPPE II. surnommé le BON, Duc de Bourgoigne, de Lothier, Brab. de Limbourg, et de Lussembourg, Conte de Flandre, d'Arthois, de Bourgoigne, Haynaut, Hollande, Zelande, et de Namur, Marquis du S.t Empire, Sire de Frise et de Malines, Cousin germain du Precedent fils de IEAN sans POEVR et Nepueu D'ANTOINE de Bourgoigne, procrea CHARLES HARDY de sa femme ELISABETH, fille de IEAN Roy de Portugal. Il trespassa l'an 1467 ensevely a Bruges et depuis transporté a Dijon en Bourgoigne.
F. Brunetta sculp.

'Come away,' whispered Gerard, trembling; 'come away,' and the friends strode forward.

When they passed the head of the column, and saw the men walk with their eyes bent in bitter gloom upon the ground, and the women, some carrying, some leading, little children, and weeping as they went, and the poor bairns some frolicking, some weeping because 'their mammies' wept, Gerard tried hard to say a word of comfort, but choked and could utter nothing to the mourners; but gasped, 'Come on, Denys. I cannot mock such sorrow with little words of comfort.' And now, artist-like, all his aim was to get swiftly out of the grief he could not soothe. He almost ran not to hear these sighs and sobs.

'Why, mate,' said Denys, 'art the colour of a lemon. Man alive, take not other folk's troubles to heart! Not one of those whining milksops there but would see thee, a stranger, hanged without winking.'

Gerard scarce listened to him.

'Decant them?' he groaned. 'Ay, if blood were no thicker than wine. Princes, ye are wolves. Poor things! Poor things! Ah, Denys! Denys! with looking on their grief mine own comes home to me. Well-a-day! Ah, well-a-day!'

'Ay, now you talk reason. That you, poor lad, should be driven all the way from Holland to Rome, is pitiful indeed; but these snivelling curs, where is their hurt? There is six score of 'em to keep one another company; besides, they are not going out of Burgundy.'

'Better for them if they had never been in it.'

'Méchant, va! they are but going from one village to another, — a mule's journey; whilst thou — There, no more. Courage, camarade, le diable est mort!'

Gerard shook his head very doubtfully, but kept silence for about a mile, and then he said thoughtfully, 'Ay, Denys, but then I am sustained by book-learning. These are simple folk that likely thought their village was the world. Now, what is this? More weeping? Oh, 't is a sweet world. Humph? A little girl that hath broke her pipkin. Now, may I hang on one of your gibbets but I 'll dry somebody's tears;' and he pounced savagely upon this little martyr, like a kite on a chick, but with more generous intentions.

It was a pretty little lass of about twelve. The tears were raining down her two peaches, and her palms lifted to heaven in that utter, though temporary, desolation, which attends calamity at twelve, and at her feet the fatal

cause, — a broken pot, worth, say, the fifth of a modern farthing.

'What! hast broken thy pot, little one?' said Gerard, acting intensest sympathy.

'Hélas! bel gars, as you behold;' and the hands came down from the sky and both pointed at the fragments, — a statuette of adversity.

'And you weep so for that?'

'Needs I must, bel gars. My mammy will massacre me. Do they not already' — with a fresh burst of woe — 'c-c-call me J-J-Jean-net-on C-C-Cassetout? It wanted but this, that I should break my poor pot. Hélas! fallait-il donc, mère de Dieu?'

'Courage, little love,' said Gerard; 'it is not thy heart lies broken. Money will soon mend pots. See now, here is a piece of silver; and there, scarce a stone's throw off, is a potter. Take the bit of silver to him, and buy another pot; and the copper the potter will give thee, keep that to play with thy comrades.'

The little mind took in all this, and smiles began to struggle with the tears; but spasms are like waves, — they cannot go down the very moment the wind of trouble is lulled. So Denys thought well to bring up his reserve of consolation. 'Courage, ma mie, le diable est mort!' cried that inventive warrior, gayly.

Gerard shrugged his shoulders at such a way of cheering a little girl.

> 'What a fine thing
> Is a lute with one string,'

said he.

The little girl's face broke into warm sunshine. 'Oh, the good news! oh, the good news!' she sang out with such heartfelt joy it went off into a honeyed whine, — even as our gay old tunes have a pathos underneath. 'So, then,' said she, 'they will no longer be able to threaten us little girls with him, making our lives a burden!' And she bounded off 'to tell Nanette,' she said.

There is a theory that everything has its counterpart; if true, Denys, it would seem, had found the mind his consigne fitted.

While he was roaring with laughter at its unexpected success and Gerard's amazement, a little hand pulled his jerkin, and a little face peeped round his waist. Curiosity was now the dominant passion in that small but vivid countenance.

'Est-ce toi qui l'a tué, beau soldat?'

'Oui, ma mie,' said Denys, as gruffly as ever he could, rightly deeming this would smack of supernatural puissance to owners of bell-like

trebles. 'C'est moi. Çà vaut une petite embrassade — pas ?'

'Je crois ben. Aie ! aie !

'Qu'as-tu ?'

'Çà pique ! çà pique !'

'Quel dommage ! je vais la couper.'

'Nenni, ce n'est rien ; et pisque t'as tué ce méchant. T'es fièrement beau, tout d' même, toi ; t'es ben miex que ma grande sœur.'

'Will you not kiss me, too, ma mie ?' said Gerard.

'Je ne demande par miex. Tiens, tiens, tiens ! c'est doulce celle-ci. Ah ! que j'aimons les hommes ! Des fames, çà ne m'aurait jamais donné l'arjan blanc, plutôt çà m'aurait ri au nez. C'est si peu de chose, les fames. Serviteur, beaulx sires ! Bon voiage ; et n'oubliez point la Jeanneton !'

'Adieu, petit cœur,' said Gerard, and on they marched : but presently looking back they saw the contemner of women in the middle of the road, making them a reverence, and blowing them kisses with little May morning face.

'Come on,' cried Gerard, lustily. 'I shall win to Rome yet. Holy Saint Bavon, what a sunbeam of innocence hath shot across our bloodthirsty road ! Forget thee, little Jeanneton ? — not likely, amidst all this slobbering and

gibbeting and decanting. Come on, thou laggard! Forward!'

'Dost call this marching?' remonstrated Denys; 'why, we shall walk o'er Christmas-day and never see it.'

At the next town they came to, suddenly an arbalister ran out of a tavern after them, and in a moment his beard and Denys's were like two brushes struck together. It was a comrade. He insisted on their coming into the tavern with him, and breaking a bottle of wine. In course of conversation he told Denys there was an insurrection in the duke's Flemish provinces, and soldiers were ordered thither from all parts of Burgundy. 'Indeed, I marvelled to see thy face turned this way.'

'I go to embrace my folk that I have not seen these three years. Ye can quell a bit of a rising without me, I trow.'

Suddenly Denys gave a start. 'Dost hear, Gerard? This comrade is bound for Holland.'

'What then? Ah, a letter! a letter to Margaret! But will he be so good, so kind?'

The soldier with a torrent of blasphemy informed him he would not only take it, but go a league or two out of his way to do it.

In an instant out came inkhorn and paper from Gerard's wallet, and he wrote a long letter

to Margaret, and told her briefly what I fear I have spun too tediously; dwelt most on the bear, and the plunge in the Rhine, and the character of Denys, whom he painted to the life; and with many endearing expressions bade her be of good cheer. Some trouble and peril there had been, but all that was over now; and his only grief left was, that he could not hope to have a word from her hand till he should reach Rome. He ended with comforting her again as hard as he could. And so absorbed was he in his love and his work that he did not see all the people in the room were standing peeping, to watch the nimble and true finger execute such rare penmanship.

Denys, proud of his friend's skill, let him alone, till presently the writer's face worked, and soon the scalding tears began to run down his young cheeks, one after another, on the paper where he was then writing comfort, comfort. Then Denys rudely repulsed the curious, and asked his comrade with a faltering voice whether he had the heart to let so sweet a love-letter miscarry? The other swore by the face of Saint Luke he would lose the forefinger of his right hand sooner.

Seeing him so ready, Gerard charged him also with a short, cold letter to his parents; and in

it he drew hastily with his pen two hands grasping each other, to signify farewell. By-the-by, one drop of bitterness found its way into his letter to Margaret:—'I write to thee alone, and to those who love thee. If my flesh and blood care to hear news of me, they must be kind to thee, and then thou mayst read my letter to them, but not else; and even then let this not out of thy hand or thou lovest me not. I know what I ask of thee, and why I ask it. Thou knowest not. I am older now by many years than thou art, and I was a month agone. Therefore obey me in this one thing, dear heart, or thou wilt make me a worse wife than I hope to make thee a husband, God willing.'

On second thoughts I believe there was something more than bitterness in this; for his mind, young but intense, had been bent many hours in every day upon Sevenbergen and Tergou, and speculated on every change of feeling and circumstance that his exile might bring about.

Gerard now offered money to the soldier. He hesitated, but declined it. 'No, no! art comrade of my comrade; and may'—— (etc.) —— 'but thy love for the wench touches me. I 'll break another bottle at thy charge an thou wilt, and so cry quits.'

[illegible]

'Well said [illegible] taken money. [illegible] courtyard [illegible]

'Whereupon I [illegible] retorted the other.

'Hadst done my [illegible] not.'

They drank the new [illegible] hered to [illegible] routes.

This delay however [illegible] calculations, and [illegible] reached a little town he was making for, where was a famous hotel. However, they [illegible] a roadside *auberge;* and Denys, seeing a buxom girl at the door, said, 'This seems a decent inn,' and led the way into the kitchen. They ordered supper, to which no objection was raised, only the landlord requested them to pay for it beforehand. It was not an uncommon proposal in any part of the world; still it was not universal, and Denys was nettled, and dashed his hand somewhat ostentatiously into his purse and pulled out a gold angel. 'Count me the change, and speedily,' said he. 'You tavern-keepers are more likely to rob me than I you.'

While the supper was preparing, Denys disappeared, and was eventually found by Gerard

in the yard, helping Manon, his plump but not bright decoy duck, to draw water, and pouring extravagant compliments into her dullish ear. Gerard grunted and returned to table, but Denys did not come in for a good quarter of an hour.

'Up-hill work at the end of a march,' said he, shrugging his shoulders.

'What matters that to you?' said Gerard, dryly. 'The mad dog bites all the world.'

'Exaggerator. You know I bite but the fairer half. Well, here comes supper; that is better worth biting.'

During supper the girl kept constantly coming in and out, and looking point-blank at them, especially at Denys, and at last in leaning over him to remove a dish, dropped a word in his ear; and he replied with a nod.

As soon as supper was cleared away, Denys rose and strolled to the door, telling Gerard the sullen fair had relented, and given him a little rendezvous in the stable-yard.

Gerard suggested that the cow-house would have been a more appropriate locality. 'I shall go to bed, then,' said he, a little crossly. 'Where is the landlord? Out at this time of night? No matter. I know our room. Shall you be long, pray?'

'Not I. I grudge leaving the fire and thee. But what can I do? There are two sorts of invitations a Burgundian never declines.'

Denys found a figure seated by the well. It was Manon; but instead of receiving him as he thought he had a right to expect, coming by invitation, all she did was to sob. He asked her what ailed her? She sobbed. Could he do anything for her? She sobbed.

The good-natured Denys, driven to his wit's end (which was no great distance), proffered the custom of the country by way of consolation. She repulsed him roughly: 'Is it a time for fooling?' said she, and sobbed.

'You seem to think so,' said Denys, waxing wroth. But the next moment he added tenderly, 'And I, who could never bear to see beauty in distress.'

'It is not for myself.'

'Who then? Your sweetheart?'

'Oh, que nenni. My sweetheart is not on earth now; and to think I have not an écu to buy masses for his soul.' And in this shallow nature the grief seemed now to be all turned in another direction.

'Come, come,' said Denys, 'shalt have

money to buy masses for thy dead lad ; I swear it. Meantime tell me why you weep.'

'For you.'

'For me? Art mad?'

'No. I am not mad. 'T is you that were mad to open your purse before him.'

The mystery seemed to thicken ; and Denys, wearied of stirring up the mud by questions, held his peace to see if it would not clear of itself. Then the girl, finding herself no longer questioned, seemed to go through some internal combat. At last she said, doggedly and aloud, 'I will. The Virgin give me courage! What matters it if they kill me, since he is dead? Soldier, the landlord is out.'

'Oh, is he?'

'What! do landlords leave their taverns at this time of night? Also see what a tempest! We are sheltered here; but t'other side it blows a hurricane.'

Denys said nothing.

'He is gone to fetch the band.'

'The band! What band?'

'Those who will cut your throat and take your gold. Wretched man! to go and shake gold in an innkeeper's face.'

The blow came so unexpectedly it staggered even Denys, accustomed as he was to sudden

perils. He muttered a single word, but in it a volume: —

'Gerard!'

'Gerard! What is that? Oh, 't is thy comrade's name, poor lad. Get him out quick ere they come, and fly to the next town.'

'And thou?'

'They will kill me.'

'That shall they not. Fly with us.'

''T will avail me nought. One of the band will be sent to kill me. They are sworn to slay all who betray them.'

'I 'll take thee to my native place full thirty leagues from hence, and put thee under my own mother's wing, ere they shall hurt a hair o' thy head. But first Gerard. Stay thou here while I fetch him.' As he was darting off the girl seized him convulsively, and with all the strength excitement lends to women. 'Stay me not, for pity's sake!' he cried; ''t is life or death.'

'Sh! — sh!' whispered the girl, stopping his mouth hard with her hand, and putting her pale lips close to him, and her eyes, that seemed to turn backward, straining toward some indistinct sound.

He listened. He heard footsteps, — many footsteps, — and no voices.

She whispered in his ear, 'They are come,' and trembled like a leaf.

Denys felt it was so. Travellers in that number would never have come in dead silence.

The feet were now at the very door.

'How many?' said he, in a hollow whisper.

'Hush!' and she put her mouth to his very ear (and who that had seen this man and woman in that attitude would have guessed what freezing hearts were theirs, and what terrible whispers passed between them). 'Seven.'

'How armed?'

'Sword and dagger, and the giant with his axe. They call him the Abbot.'

'And my comrade?'

'Nothing can save him. Better lose one life than two. Fly!'

Denys's blood froze at this cynical advice. 'Poor creature, you know not a soldier's heart!' He put his head in his hands a moment, and a hundred thoughts of dangers baffled whirled through his brain.

'Listen, girl! There is one chance for our lives, if thou wilt but be true to us. Run to the town, — to the nearest tavern, — and tell the first soldier there that a soldier here is sore beset, but armed, and his life to be saved if they will but run. Then to the bailiff. But

first to the soldiers. Nay, not a word, but buss me, good lass, and fly: Mere's lives hang on thy heels.'

She kilted up her gown in run. He came round to the road with her: saw her cross the road cringing with fear, then glide away, then turn into an erect shadow, then melt away in the storm.

And now he must get to Gerard. But how? He had to run the gantlet of the whole band. He asked himself what was the worst thing they could do, — for he had learned in war that an enemy does not what you hope he will do, but what you hope he will not do. 'Attack me as I enter the kitchen! Then I must not give them time.' Just as he drew near to the latch a terrible thought crossed him. 'Suppose they had already dealt with Gerard! Why, then,' thought he, 'nought is left but to kill, and be killed;' and he strung his bow, and walked rapidly into the kitchen. There were seven hideous faces seated round the fire, and the landlord pouring them out neat brandy, — blood's forerunner in every age.

'What! company?' cried Denys, gayly. 'One minute, my lads, and I'll be with you;' and he snatched up a lighted candle off the table, opened the door that led to the staircase,

all that had passed, and that the girl was gone for aid.

'Pray Heaven, she may not lose heart by the way,' said Denys, sorrowfully.

And Denys begged Gerard's forgiveness for bringing him out of his way for this.

Gerard forgave him.

'I would fear them less, Gerard, but for one they call the Abbot. I picked him out at once. Taller than you, bigger than us both put together. Fights with an axe. Gerard, a man to lead a herd of deer to battle. I shall kill that man to-night, or he will kill me. I think somehow 't is he will kill me.'

'Saints forbid! Shoot him at the door! What avails his strength against your weapon?'

'I shall pick him out; but if it comes to hand fighting, run swiftly under his guard or you are a dead man. I tell thee neither of us may stand a blow of that axe. Thou never sawest such a body of a man.'

Gerard was for bolting the door; but Denys with a sigh showed him that half the doorpost turned outward on a hinge and the great bolt was little more than a blind. 'I have forborne to bolt it,' said he, 'that they may think us the less suspicious.'

Near an hour rolled away thus. It seemed an

age. Yet it was but a little hour: and the town was a league distant. And some of the voices in the kitchen became angry and impatient.

'They will not wait much longer,' said Denys, 'and we have no chance at all unless we surprise them.'

'I will do whate'er you bid,' said Gerard, meekly.

There was a cupboard on the same side as the door, but between it and the window. It reached nearly to the ground, but not quite. Denys opened the cupboard door and placed Gerard on a chair behind it. 'If they run for the bed, strike at the napes of their necks! A sword-cut there always kills or disables.' He then arranged the bolsters and their shoes in the bed so as to deceive a person peeping from a distance, and drew the short curtains at the head.

Meantime Gerard was on his knees. Denys looked round and saw him.

'Ah!' said Denys, 'above all pray them to forgive me for bringing you into this guetapens!'

And now they grasped hands and looked in each other's eyes, — oh, such a look! Denys's hand was cold, and Gerard's [illegible]

They took their posts, [illegible] out the candle. 'We must keep [illegible] but in

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'Ah!' said Denys, 'above all pray them to forgive me for bringing you into this guetapens!'

And now they grasped hands and looked in each other's eyes, — oh, such a look! Denys's hand was cold, and Gerard's warm.

They took their posts. Denys blew out the candle. 'We must keep silence now.' But in

the terrible tension of their nerves and very souls they found they could hear a whisper fainter than any man could catch at all outside that door. They could hear each other's hearts thump at times.

'Good news!' breathed Denys, listening at the door.

'They are casting lots.'

'Pray that it may be the Abbot.'

'Yes. Why?'

'If he comes alone I can make sure of him.'

'Denys!'

'Ay!'

'I fear I shall go mad if they do not come soon.'

'Shall I feign sleep? Shall I snore?'

'Will that — ?'

'Perhaps.'

'Do then, and God have mercy on us!

Denys snored at intervals.

There was a scuffling of feet heard in the kitchen, and then all was still.

Denys snored again, then took up his position behind the door.

But he, or they, who had drawn the lot, seemed determined to run no foolish risks. Nothing was attempted in a hurry.

When they were almost starved with cold

and waiting for the attack, the door on the stairs opened softly and closed again. Nothing more.

There was another harrowing silence. Then a single light footstep on the stair; and nothing more.

Then a light crept under the door; and nothing more.

Presently there was a gentle scratching, not half so loud as a mouse's, and the false doorpost opened by degrees and left a perpendicular space through which the light streamed in. The door, had it been bolted, would now have hung by the bare tip of the bolt, which went into the real doorpost; but as it was, it swung gently open of itself. It opened inward, so Denys did not raise his crossbow from the ground, but merely grasped his dagger.

The candle was held up, and shaded from behind by a man's hand. He was inspecting the beds from the threshold, satisfied that his victims were both in bed.

The man glided into the apartment. But at the first step something in the position of the cupboard and chair made him uneasy. He ventured no farther, but put the candle on the floor and stooped to peer under the chair; but as he stooped, an iron hand grasped his shoulder, and

a dagger was driven so fiercely through his neck that the point came out at his gullet. There was a terrible hiccough, but no cry ; and half a dozen silent strokes followed in swift succession, each a death-blow, and the assassin was laid noislessly on the floor.

Denys closed the door, bolted it gently, drew the post to, and even while he was doing it whispered Gerard to bring a chair. It was done.

'Help me set him up.'

'Dead ?'

'Parbleu !'

'What for ?'

'Frighten them ! Gain time.'

Even while saying this, Denys had whipped a piece of string round the dead man's neck, and tied him to the chair, and there the ghastly figure sat fronting the door.

'Denys, I can do better. Saints forgive me !'

'What ? Be quick then ; we have not many moments.'

And Denys got his crossbow ready, and tearing off his straw mattress, reared it before him, and prepared to shoot the moment the door should open ; for he had no hope any more would come singly, when they found the first did not return.

While thus employed, Gerard was busy about the seated corpse; and, to his amazement, Denys saw a luminous glow spreading rapidly over the white face.

Gerard blew out the candle. And on this, the corpse's face shone still more like a glow-worm's head.

Denys shook in his shoes, and his teeth chattered. 'What in Heaven's name is this?' he whispered.

'Hush! 'T is but phosphorus; but 't will serve.'

'Away! they will surprise thee.'

In fact uneasy mutterings were heard below, and at last a deep voice said, 'What makes him so long? Is the drôle rifling them?'

It was their comrade they suspected then, not the enemy. Soon a step came softly but rapidly up the stairs; the door was gently tried.

When this resisted (which was clearly not expected), the sham post was very cautiously moved, and an eye no doubt peeped through the aperture, for there was a howl of dismay; and the man was heard to stumble back and burst into the kitchen, where a Babel of voices rose directly on his return.

Gerard ran to the dead thief and began to work on him again.

'Back, madman!' whispered Denys.

'Nay, nay; I know these ignorant brutes. They will not venture here awhile. I can make him ten times more fearful.'

'At least close that opening! Let them not see you at your devilish work.'

Gerard closed the sham post, and in half a minute his brush made the dead head a sight to strike any man with dismay. He put his art to a strange use, and one unparalleled perhaps in the history of mankind. He illuminated his dead enemy's face to frighten his living foe: the staring eyeballs he made globes of fire; the teeth he left white, for so they were more terrible by the contrast, but the palate and tongue he tipped with fire, and made one lurid cavern of the red depths the chapfallen jaw revealed; and on the brow he wrote in burning letters 'La Mort.' And while he was doing it, the stout Denys was quaking, and fearing the vengeance of Heaven (for one man's courage is not another's); and the band of miscreants below were quarrelling and disputing loudly, and now without disguise.

The steps that led down to the kitchen were fifteen, but they were nearly perpendicular; there was therefore in point of fact no distance between the besiegers and besieged, and the

latter now caught almost every word. At last one was heard to cry out, 'I tell ye the devil has got him and branded him with hell-fire. I am more like to leave this cursed house than go again into a room that is full of fiends.'

'Art drunk, or mad, or a coward?' said another.

'Call me a coward, I 'll give thee my dagger's point, and send thee where Pierre sits o' fire forever.'

'Come, no quarrelling when work is afoot,' roared a tremendous diapason, 'or I 'll brain ye both with my fist, and send ye where we shall all go soon or late.'

'The Abbot,' whispered Denys, gravely.

He felt the voice he had just heard could belong to no man but the colossus he had seen in passing through the kitchen. It made the place vibrate. The quarrelling continued some time, and then there was a dead silence.

'Look out, Gerard.'

'Ay. What will they do next?'

'We shall soon know.'

'Shall I wait for you, or cut down the first that opens the door?'

'Wait for me, lest we strike the same and waste a blow. Alas! we cannot afford that.'

Dead silence.

Sudden came into the room a thing that made them start and their hearts quiver.

And what was it? A moonbeam.

Even so can this machine, the body, by the soul's action be strung up to start and quiver.

The sudden ray shot keen and pure into that shamble. Its calm, cold, silvery soul traversed the apartment in a stream of no great volume; for the window was narrow.

After the first tremor Gerard whispered, 'Courage, Denys! God's eye is on us even here.' And he fell upon his knees with his face turned toward the window.

Ay, it was like a holy eye opening suddenly on human crime and human passions. Many a scene of blood and crime that pure cold eye has rested on; but on few more ghastly than this, where two men, with a lighted corpse between them, waited panting, to kill and be killed. Nor did the moonlight deaden that horrible corpse-light. If anything, it added to its ghastliness; for the body sat at the edge of the moonbeam, which cut sharp across the shoulder and the ear, and seemed blue and ghastly and unnatural by the side of that lurid glow in which the face and eyes and teeth shone horribly.

But Denys dared not look that way. The moon drew a broad stripe of light across the

door, and on that his eyes were glued. Presently he whispered, 'Gerard!'

Gerard looked, and raised his sword.

Acutely as they had listened they had heard of late no sound on the stair. Yet there, on the doorpost, at the edge of the stream of moonlight, were the tips of the fingers of a hand.

The nails glistened.

Presently they began to crawl, and crawl, down toward the bolt, but with infinite slowness and caution. In so doing they crept into the moonlight. The actual motion was imperceptible, but slowly, slowly, the fingers came out whiter and whiter; but the hand between the main knuckles and the wrist remained dark. Denys slowly raised his crossbow. He levelled it. He took a long, steady aim.

Gerard palpitated. At last the crossbow twanged. The hand was instantly nailed, with a stern jar, to the quivering doorpost. There was a scream of anguish. 'Cut!' whispered Denys, eagerly; and Gerard's uplifted sword descended and severed the wrist with two swift blows. A body sank down moaning outside.

The hand remained inside, immovable, with blood trickling from it down the wall. The fierce bolt slightly barbed had gone through it, and deep into the real doorpost.

'Two,' said Denys, with terrible cynicism.

He strung his crossbow, and kneeled behind his cover again.

'The next will be the Abbot.'

The wounded man moved, and presently crawled down to his companions on the stairs, and the kitchen door was shut.

There nothing was heard now but low muttering. The last incident had revealed the mortal character of the weapons used by the besieged.

'I begin to think the Abbot's stomach is not so great as his body,' said Denys.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the following events happened all in a couple of seconds. The kitchen door was opened roughly, a heavy but active man darted up the steps without any manner of disguise, and a single ponderous blow sent the door not only off its hinges, but right across the room on to Denys's fortification, which it struck so rudely as nearly to lay him flat. And in the doorway stood a colossus with a glittering axe.

He saw the dead man with the moon's blue light on half his face, and the red light on the other half and inside his chapfallen jaws. He stared, his arms fell, his knees knocked together, and he crouched with terror.

"[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Denys [illegible] his [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"But [illegible] the giant."

"[illegible] Gerard [illegible] Denys [illegible] not. And the worst [illegible] [illegible] Fool [illegible] never [illegible] [illegible] meddling."

"Ha [illegible] your [illegible] [illegible] door."

Then Denys [illegible] had committed [illegible] vinced his last [illegible] sword, but [illegible] A red light flickers on the ceiling.

Gerard flew to the window and [illegible] out. There were men with torches, and [illegible] gleaming red. "We are [illegible]. Armed men." And he dashed his sword through the window shouting "Quick! quick! we are sore pressed."

'Back!' yelled Denys; 'they come! Strike none but him!'

That very moment the Abbot and two men with naked weapons rushed into the room. Even as they came, the outer door was hammered fiercely, and the Abbot's comrades hearing it, and seeing the torchlight, turned and fled. Not so the terrible Abbot. Wild with rage and pain, he spurned his dead comrade, chair and all, across the room; then, as the men faced him on each side with kindling eyeballs, he waved his tremendous axe like a feather right and left, and cleared a space, then lifted it to hew them both in pieces.

His antagonists were inferior in strength, but not in swiftness and daring, and above all they had settled how to attack him. The moment he reared his axe, they flew at him like cats, and both together. If he struck a full blow with his weapon he would most likely kill one, but the other would certainly kill him. He saw this; and intelligent as well as powerful, he thrust the handle fiercely in Denys's face, and, turning, jobbed with the steel at Gerard. Denys went staggering back covered with blood. Gerard had rushed in like lightning, and just as the axe turned to descend on him, drove his sword so fiercely through the giant's body that the

very hilt sounded on his ribs like the blow of a pugilist; and Denys, staggering back to help his friend, saw a steel point come out of the Abbot behind.

The stricken giant bellowed like a bull, dropped his axe, and clutching Gerard's throat tremendously, shook him like a child. Then Denys with a fierce snarl drove his sword into the giant's back. 'Stand firm now!' and he pushed the cold steel through and through the giant and out at his breast.

Thus horribly spitted on both sides, the Abbot gave a violent shudder, and his heels hammered the ground convulsively. His lips, fast turning blue, opened wide and deep, and he cried 'La mort! la mort! la mort!' The first time in a roar of despair, and then twice in a horror-stricken whisper never to be forgotten.

Just then the street door was forced.

Suddenly the Abbot's arms whirled like windmills, and his huge body wrenched wildly and carried them to the doorway, twisting their wrists and nearly throwing them off their legs.

'He'll win clear yet,' cried Denys. 'Out steel, and in again!'

They tore out their smoking swords, but ere they could stab again, the Abbot leaped full free

feet high, and fell with a tremendous crash against the door below, carrying it away with him like a sheet of paper, and through the aperture the glare of torches burst on the awe-struck faces above, half blinding them.

The thieves at the first alarm had made for the back door, but driven thence by a strong guard ran back to the kitchen just in time to see the lock forced out of the socket, and half a dozen mailed archers burst in upon them. On these, in pure despair, they drew their swords. But ere a blow was struck on either side, the staircase door behind them was battered into their midst with one ponderous blow, and with it the Abbot's body came flying, — hurled, as they thought, by no mortal hand, — and rolled on the floor spouting blood from back and bosom in two furious jets, and quivered, but breathed no more.

The thieves, smitten with dismay, fell on their knees directly, and the archers bound them; while, above, the rescued ones still stood like statues, rooted to the spot, their dripping swords extended in the red torchlight, expecting their indomitable enemy to leap back on them as wonderfully as he had gone.

CHAPTER VII.

'WHERE be the true men?'

'Here be we. God bless you all! God bless you!'

There was a rush to the stairs, and half a dozen hard but friendly hands were held out and grasped them warmly. 'Y' have saved our lives, lads,' cried Denys; 'y' have saved our lives this night.'

A wild sight met the eyes of the rescued pair, —the room flaring with torches, the glittering breastplates of the archers, their bronzed faces, the white cheeks of the bound thieves, and the bleeding giant, whose dead body these hard men left lying there in its own gore.

Gerard went round the archers and took them each by the hand with glistening eyes, and on this they all kissed him; and this time he kissed them in return. Then he said to one handsome archer of his own age, 'Prithee, good soldier, have an eye to me. A strange drowsiness overcomes me. Let no one cut my throat while I sleep, for pity's sake.'

The archer promised with a laugh, for he thought Gerard was jesting; and the latter went off into a deep sleep almost immediately.

Denys was surprised at this, but did not interfere; for it suited his immediate purpose. A couple of archers were inspecting the Abbot's body, turning it half over with their feet, and inquiring, 'Which of the two had flung this enormous rogue down from an upper story like that; they would fain have the trick of his arm.'

Denys at first pished and pshawed, but dared not play the braggart; for he said to himself, 'That young vagabond will break in and say 't was the finger of Heaven, and no mortal arm, or some such stuff, and make me look like a fool.' But now, seeing Gerard unconscious, he suddenly gave this required information.

'Well, then, you see, comrades, I had run my sword through this one up to the hilt, and one or two more of 'em came buzzing about me; so it behooved me have my sword or die. So I just put my foot against his stomach, gave a tug with my hand and spring with my foot, and sent him flying to kingdom come! He died in the air, and his carrion rolled in amongst you without ceremony; made you jump, I warrant me. But pikestaves and pillage! what avails

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

'Oh, the fine mouldy smell,' said Denys. [illegible] what is that in the corner? A pile of rags? [illegible] is a man.'

They gathered round with the torch, and [illegible] a figure crouched on a heap in the corner, pale as ashes, and shivering.

'Why, it is the [illegible],' said Denys.

'Get up, thou craven heart!' shouted one of the archers.

'Why, man, the thieves are bound; and we are dry that bound them. Up! and show us thy wine; for no bottles see I here.'

'What! be the rascals bound?' stammered the pale landlord; 'good news. W-w-wine? That will I, honest sirs.' And he rose with unsure joints and offered to lead the way to the wine-cellar.

But Denys interposed. 'You are all in the dark, comrades. He is in league with the thieves.'

'Alack, good soldier, me in league with the accursed robbers! Is that reasonable?'

'The girl said so, any way.'

'The girl! What girl? Ah! Curse her, traitress!'

'Well,' interposed the other archer, 'the girl is not here, but gone on to the bailiff. So let the burghers settle whether this craven be guilty or no, for we caught him not in the act; and let him draw us our wine.'

'One moment,' said Denys, shrewdly. 'Why cursed he the girl? If he be a true man, he should bless her as we do.'

'Alas, sir!' said the landlord, 'I have but my good name to live by; and I cursed her to you because you said she had belied me.'

'Humph! I trow thou art a thief; and where is the thief that cannot lie with a smooth face? Therefore hold him, comrades. A prisoner can draw wine an if his hands be not bound.'

The landlord offered no objection; but on the contrary said he would with pleasure show them where his little stock of wine was, but hopes they would pay for what they should drink, for his rent was due this two months.

The archers smiled grimly at his simplicity as they thought it. One of them laid a hand quietly but firmly on his shoulder, the other led on with the torch.

They had reached the threshold when Denys cried 'Halt!'

'What is 't?'

'Here be bottles in this corner: advance thy light.'

The torch-bearer went toward him. He had just taken off his scabbard and was prodding the heap the landlord had just been crouched upon.

'Nay, nay,' cried the landlord, 'the wine is in the next cellar. There is nothing there.'

'Nothing is mighty hard, then,' said Denys, and drew out something with his hand from the heap.

It proved to be only a bone.

Denys threw it on the floor; it rattled.

'There is nought there but the bones of the house,' said the landlord.

'Just now 't was nothing. Now that we have

found something, 't is nothing but bones. Here 's another. Humph! Look at this one, comrade; and you come too and look at it, and bring yon smooth knave along.'

The archer with the torch, whose name was Philippe, held the bone to the light, and turned it round and round.

'Well?' said Denys.

'Well, if this was a field of battle I should say 't was the shank-bone of a man; no more, no less. But 't is n't a battle-field, nor a churchyard; 't is an inn.'

'True, mate; but yon knave's ashy face is as good a light to me as a field of battle. I read the bone by it. Bring yon face nearer, I say. When the chine is a-missing, and the house-dog can't look at you without his tail creeping between his legs, who was the thief? Good brothers mine, my mind it doth misgive me. The deeper I thrust the more there be. Mayhap if these bones could tell their tale they would make true men's flesh creep that heard it.'

'Alas! young man, what hideous fancies are these? The bones are bones of beeves and sheep and kids, and not, as you think, of men and women. Holy saints preserve us!'

'Hold thy peace! Thy words are air. Thou hast not got burghers by the ear, that know not

a veal knuckle from their grandsire's ribs; but soldiers,—men that have gone to look for their dear comrades, and found their bones picked as clean by the crows as these, I doubt, have been by thee and thy mates. Men and women, saidst thou? And prithee, when spake I a word of women's bones? Wouldst make a child suspect thee. Field of battle, comrade? Was not this house a field of battle half an hour agone? Drag him close to me; let me read his face. Now then, what is this, thou knave?' And he thrust a small object suddenly in his face.

'Alas! I know not.'

'Well, I would not swear neither; but it is too like the thumb-bone of a man's hand. Mates, my flesh it creeps. Churchyard! How know I this is not one?' And he now drew his sword out of the scabbard and began to rake the heap of earth and broken crockery and bones out on the floor.

The landlord assured him he but wasted his time. 'We poor innkeepers are sinners,' said he; 'we give short measure and baptize the wine. We are fain to do these things, the laws are so unjust to us; but we are not assassins. How could we afford to kill our customers? May Heaven's lightning strike me dead if there be any bones there but such as have been used

for meat. 'T is the kitchen wench flings them here. I swear by God's holy mother, by holy Paul, by holy Dominic, and Denys my patron saint — Ah!'

Denys held out a bone under his eye in dead silence. It was a bone no man however ignorant, however lying, could confound with those of sheep or oxen. The sight of it shut the lying lips and palsied the heartless heart.

The landlord's hair rose visibly on his head like spikes, and his knees gave way as if his limbs had been struck from under him. But the archers dragged him fiercely up, and kept him erect under the torch, staring fascinated at the dead skull which, white as the living cheek opposed, but no whiter, glared back again at its murderer, whose pale lips now opened, and opened, but could utter no sound.

'Ah,' said Denys, solemnly, and trembling now with rage, 'look on the sockets out of which thou hast picked the eyes, and let them blast thine eyes, that crows shall pick out ere this week shall end. Now, hold thou that while I search on. Hold it, I say, or here I rob the gallows —' and he threatened the quaking wretch with his naked sword, till with a groan he took the skull and held it, almost fainting.

Oh, that every murderer and contriver of murder could see him, sick, and staggering with terror, and with his hair on end holding the cold skull, and feeling that his own head would soon be like it! And soon the heap was scattered; and, alas! not one nor two, but many skulls were brought to light, the culprit moaning at each discovery.

Suddenly Denys uttered a strange cry of distress to come from so bold and hard a man, and held up to the torch a mass of human hair. It was long, glossy, and golden. A woman's beautiful hair. At the sight of it the archers instinctively shook the craven wretch in their hands, and he whined.

'I have a little sister with hair just so fair and shining as this,' gulped Denys. 'Jesu! if it should be hers! There, quick! take my sword and dagger, and keep them from my hand, lest I strike him dead and wrong the gibbet. And thou, poor innocent victim, on whose head this most lovely hair did grow, hear me swear thus, on bended knee, never to leave this man till I see him broken to pieces on the wheel even for thy sake.' He rose from his knee. 'Ay, had he as many lives as here be hairs, I'd have them all, by God.' And he put the hair into his bosom. Then in a sudden fury seized the

landlord fiercely by the neck and forced him to his knees, and, foot on head, ground his face savagely among the bones of his victims, where they lay thickest; and the assassin first yelled, then whined and whimpered, just as a dog first yells, then whines, when his nose is so forced into some leveret or other innocent he has killed.

'Now lend me thy bowstring, Philippe!' He passed it through the eyes of a skull alternately, and hung the ghastly relic of mortality and crime round the man's neck; then pulled him up and kicked him industriously into the kitchen, where one of the aldermen of the burgh had arrived with constables, and was even now taking an archer's deposition.

The grave burgher was much startled at sight of the landlord driven in bleeding from a dozen scratches inflicted by the bones of his own victims, and carrying his horrible collar. But Denys came panting after, and in a few fiery words soon made all clear.

'Bind him like the rest,' said the alderman, sternly. 'I count him the blackest of them all.'

While his hands were being bound, the poor wretch begged piteously that 'the skull might be taken from him.'

'Humph!' said the alderman. 'Certes, I had not ordered such a thing to be put on mor-

tal man; yet being there, I will not lift voice nor finger to doff it. Methinks it fits thee truly, thou bloody dog. 'Tis thy ensign, and hangs well above a heart so foul as thine.'

He then inquired of Denys if he thought they had secured the whole gang, or but a part.

'Your worship,' said Denys, 'there are but seven of them, and this landlord. One we slew upstairs, one we trundled down dead; the rest are bound before you.'

'Good! go fetch the dead one from upstairs, and lay him beside him I caused to be removed.'

Here a voice like a guinea-fowl's broke peevishly in. 'Now, now, now, where is the hand? That is what I want to see.' The speaker was a little pettifogging clerk.

'You will find it above, nailed to the door-post by a crossbow bolt.'

'Good!' said the clerk. He whispered his master, 'What a goodly show will the *pièces de conviction* make!' and with this he wrote them down, enumerating them in separate squeaks as he penned them, — 'skulls, bones, a woman's hair, a thief's hand, one axe, two carcasses, one crossbow bolt.' This done, he itched to search the cellar himself: there might be other invaluable morsels of evidence, — an ear, or even an earring. The alderman assenting, he caught up

a torch and was hurrying thither when an accident stopped him, and indeed carried him a step or two in the opposite direction.

The constables had gone up the stair in single file. But the head constable no sooner saw the phosphorescent corpse seated by the bedside than he stood stupefied; and next he began to shake like one in an ague, and terror gaining on him more and more, he uttered a sort of howl and recoiled swiftly. Forgetting the steps in his recoil, he tumbled over backward on his nearest companion; but *he*, shaken by the shout of dismay, and catching a glimpse of something horrid, was already staggering back, and in no condition to sustain the head constable, who, like most head constables, was a ponderous man. The two carried away the third, and the three the fourth; and they streamed into the kitchen, and settled on the floor, overlapping each other like a sequence laid out on a card-table. The clerk coming hastily with his torch ran an involuntary tilt against the fourth man, who, sharing the momentum of the mass, knocked him instantly on his back, — the ace of that fair quint, and there he lay kicking and waving his torch, apparently in triumph, but really in convulsion, sense and wind being driven out together by the concussion.

'What is to do now, in Heaven's name?' cried the alderman, starting up with considerable alarm. But Denys explained and offered to accompany his worship. So he [illegible] the latter. His men picked themselves [illegible] and the alderman put himself at their head and examined the premises above and below [illegible] for the prisoners, their interrogatory was postponed till they could be confronted with his servant.

Before dawn, the thieves, alive and dead, and all the relics and evidences of crime and retribution, were swept away into the [illegible] the inn was silent and almost deserted. There remained but one constable and Denys and Gerard, the latter still sleeping near [illegible]

CHAPTER VIII.

GERARD awoke, and found Denys watching him with some anxiety.

'It is you for sleeping! Why, 't is high noon.'

'It was a blessed sleep,' said Gerard; 'methinks Heaven sent it me. It hath put as it were a veil between me and that awful night. To think that you and I sit here alive and well. How terrible a dream I seem to have had!'

'Ay, lad, that is the wise way to look at these things; when once they are past, why they are dreams, — shadows. Break thy fast, and then thou wilt think no more on 't. Moreover, I promised to bring thee on to the town by noon, and take thee to his worship.'

'What for?'

'He would put questions to thee. By the same token he was for waking thee to that end; but I withstood him earnestly, and vowed to bring thee to him in the morning.'

'Thou shalt not break troth for me.'

Gerard then sopped some rye bread in red wine and ate it to break his fast; then went

with Denys over the scene of combat, and came back shuddering ; and finally took the road with his friend, and kept peering through the hedges, and expecting sudden attacks unreasonably, till they reached the little town. Denys took him to the White Heart.

'No fear of cutthroats here,' said he. 'I know the landlord this many a year. He is a burgess, and looks to be bailiff. 'T is here I was making for yestreen. But we lost time, and night o'ertook us — and — '

'And you saw a woman at the door, and would be wiser than la Jeanneton. She told us they were nought.'

'Why, what saved our lives if not a woman? Ay, and risked her own to do it.'

'That is true, Denys ; and though women are nothing to me, I long to thank this poor girl, and reward her, — ay, though I share every doit in my purse with her. Do not you ? '

'Parbleu ! '

'Where shall we find her ? '

'Mayhap the alderman will tell us. We must go to him first.'

The alderman received them with a most singular and inexplicable expression of countenance. However, after a moment's reflection, he wore a grim smile, and finally proceeded to

put interrogatories to Gerard, and took down the answers. This done, he told them that they must stay in the town till the thieves were tried, and be at hand to give evidence, on peril of fine and imprisonment. They looked very blank at this.

'However,' said he, ''t will not be long, the culprits having been taken red-handed.' He added, 'And you know in any case you could not leave the place this week.'

Denys stared at this remark; and Gerard smiled at what he thought the simplicity of the old gentleman in dreaming that a provincial town of Burgundy had attraction to detain him from Rome and Margaret.

He now went to that which was nearest both their hearts. 'Your worship,' said he, 'we cannot find our benefactress in the town.'

'Nay, but who is your benefactress?'

'Who? Why the good girl that came to you by night and saved our lives at peril of her own. Oh, sir, our hearts burn within us to thank and bless her. Where is she?'

'Oh, *she* is in prison.'

CHAPTER IX.

'IN prison, sir; good lack, for what misdeed?'

'Well, she is a witness, and may be a necessary one.'

'Why, Messire Bailiff,' put in Denys, 'you lay not all your witnesses by the heels, I trow.'

The alderman, pleased at being called bailiff, became communicative. 'In a case of blood we detain all testimony that is like to give us leg-bail, and so defeat Justice; and that is why we still keep the women-folk. For a man at odd times bides a week in one mind; but a woman, if she do her duty to the realm o' Friday, she shall undo it afore Sunday, or try. Could you see yon wench now, you should find her a-blubbering at having betrayed five men to the gallows. Had they been women, we might have trusted to a subpœna. For they despise one another; and there they show some sense. But now I think on 't, there were other reasons for laying this one by the heels. Hand me those depositions, young sir.' And he put on

his glasses. 'Ay! she was implicated. She was one of the band.'

A loud disclaimer burst from Denys and Gerard at once.

'No need to deave me,' said the alderman. 'Here 't is in black and white. "Jean Hardy [that is one of the thieves], being questioned, confessed that—" humph? Ay, here 't is. "And that the girl Manon was the decoy; and her sweetheart was Georges Vipont, one of the band, and hanged last month; and that she had been deject ever since, and had openly blamed the band for his death, saying, if they had not been rank cowards he had never been taken; and it is his opinion she did but betray them out of very spite, and—"'

'His opinion,' cried Gerard, indignantly, 'What signifies the opinion of a cutthroat, burning to be revenged on her who has delivered him to justice? And an you go to that, what avails his testimony? Is a thief never a liar? Is he not aye a liar, and here a motive to lie? Revenge, why 't is the strongest of all the passions. And, oh, sir, what madness to question a detected felon and listen to him lying away an honest life,—as if he were a true man swearing in open day, with his true hand on the Gospel laid!'

'Young man,' said the alderman, 'restrain thy heat in presence of authority! I find by your tongue you are a stranger. Know, then, that in this land we question all the world. We are not so weak as to hope to get at the truth by shutting either our left ear or our right.'

'And so you would listen to Satan belying the saints!'

'Ta! ta! The law meddles but with men and women; and these cannot utter a story all lies, let them try ever so. Wherefore we shut not the barn-door (as the saying is) against any man's grain. Only having taken it in, we do winnow and sift it. And who told you I had swallowed the thief's story whole like fair water? Not so, I did but credit so much on 't as was borne out by better proof.'

'Better proof?' and Gerard looked blank. 'Why, who but the thieves would breathe a word against her?'

'Marry, herself.'

'Herself, sir? What! did you question her too?'

'I tell you we question all the world. Here is her deposition. Can you read? Read it yourself, then.'

Gerard looked at Denys and read him: —

MANON'S DEPOSITION.

'I am a native of Epinal. I left my native place two years ago because I was unfortunate: I could not like the man they bade me; so my father beat me. I ran away from my father. I went to service. I left service because the mistress was jealous of me. The reason they gave for turning me off was, because I was saucy. Last year I stood in the market-place to be hired with other girls. The landlord of the Fair Star hired me. I was eleven months with him. A young man courted me. I loved him. I found out that travellers came and never went away again. I told my lover. He bade me hold my peace. He threatened me. I found my lover was one of a band of thieves. When travellers were to be robbed the landlord went out and told the band to come. Then I wept and prayed for the travellers' souls. I never told. A month ago my lover died.

'The soldier put me in mind of my lover. He was bearded like him I had lost. I cannot tell whether I should have interfered if he had had no beard. I am sorry I told now.'

The paper almost dropped from Gerard's hands. Now for the first time he saw that

Manon's life was in mortal danger. He drew the dogged law, and the dogged men that executed it. He threw himself suddenly on his knees at the alderman's feet. "Oh, sir, think of the difference between those cruel men and this poor weak woman! Could you have the heart to send her to the same death with them? Could you have the heart to condemn us to look on and see her slaughtered, who, but that she risked her life for ours, had not now been in jeopardy? Alas, sir! show me and my comrade some pity, if you have none for her, poor soul. Denys and I be true men, and you will read our hearts if you kill that poor simple girl. What can we do? What shift for us to do then but cut our throats at her gallows foot?"

The alderman was tough, but mortal; the prayers and agitation of Gerard first astounded, then touched him. He showed it in a curious way. He became peevish and fretful. "There get up, do," said he. "I doubt whether anybody would say as many words for me. What ho, Daniel! Go fetch the town-clerk." And on that functionary entering from an adjoining room: "Here is a foolish lad fretting about you girl. Can we stretch a point, — say we admit her to bear witness, and question her favourably?"

The town-clerk was one of your 'impossibility' men.

'Nay, sir, we cannot do that; she was not concerned in this business. Had she been accessory, we might have offered her a pardon to bear witness.'

Gerard burst in. 'But she did better. Instead of being accessory, she stayed the crime; and she proffered herself as witness by running hither with the tale.'

'Tush, young man, 't is a matter of law.'

The alderman and the clerk then had a long discussion, the one maintaining, the other denying, that she stood as fair in law as if she had been accessory to the attempt on our travellers' lives. And this was lucky for Manon; for the alderman, irritated by the clerk reiterating that he could not do this, and could not that, and could not do t' other, said he would show him he *could* do anything he chose. And he had Manon out, and upon the landlord of the White Hart being her bondsman, and Denys depositing five gold pieces with him, and the girl promising, not without some coaxing from Denys, to attend as a witness, he liberated her, but eased his conscience by telling her in his own terms his reason for this leniency.

'The town had to buy a new rope for every-

body hanged, and present it to the bourreau, or else compound with him in money: and she was not in his opinion worth this municipal expense; whereas decided characters, like her late confederates, were.' And so Denys and Gerard carried her off, Gerard dancing round her for joy, Denys keeping up her heart by assuring her of the demise of a troublesome personage, and she weeping inauspiciously. However, on the road to the White Hart the public found her out, and having heard the whole story from the archers, who naturally told it warmly in her favour, followed her, hurrahing and encouraging her, till finding herself backed by numbers she plucked up heart. The landlord too saw at a glance that her presence in the inn would draw custom, and received her politely, and assigned her an upper chamber. Here she buried herself, and being alone rained tears again.

Poor little mind! it was like a ripple, up and down, down and up, up and down. Bidding the landlord be very kind to her, and keep her a prisoner without letting her feel it, the friends went out; and lo! as they stepped into the street they saw two processions coming toward them from opposite sides. One was a large one, attended with noise and howls and those indescribable cries by which rude natures reveal at

odd times that relationship to the beasts of the field and forest which at other times we succeed in hiding; the other, very thinly attended by a few nuns and friars, came slow and silent, — the prisoners going to exposure in the market-place; the gathered bones of the victims coming to the churchyard.

And the two met in the narrow street nearly at the inn door, and could not pass each other for a long time; and the bier that bore the relics of mortality got wedged against the cart that carried the men who had made those bones what they were, and in a few hours must die for it themselves. The mob had not the quick intelligence to be at once struck with this stern meeting; but at last a woman cried, 'Look at your work, ye dogs!' and the crowd took it like wildfire, and there was a horrible yell, and the culprits groaned, and tried to hide their heads upon their bosoms, but could not, their hands being tied. And there they stood, images of pale, hollow-eyed despair; and oh, how they looked on the bier, and envied those whom they had sent before them on the dark road they were going upon themselves! And the two men who were the cause of both processions stood and looked gravely on, and even Manon, hearing the disturbance, crept to the window,

and hiding [illegible] her fingers as [illegible]

This [illegible] Gerard. The [illegible] venge: the other [illegible] followed the [illegible] had so [illegible] was the [illegible] reached the [illegible] attraction that was [illegible] more than [illegible] and more than [illegible] touched with [illegible] humanity, and [illegible] the example of [illegible] headed, and saw them [illegible] of the Church in [illegible]

After the funeral [illegible] fully up to the [illegible] for their souls.

Gerard's son of Catherine [illegible] two sides of a penny [illegible] this mass a [illegible] count of the [illegible] good curé [illegible] nuity, and [illegible] price.

In the course of the business they [illegible]

a similarity of sentiments. Piety and worldly prudence are not very rare companions; still it is unusual to carry both so far as these two men did. Their collision in the prayer market led to mutual esteem, as when knight encountered knight worthy of his steel. Moreover, the good curé loved a bit of gossip, and finding his customer was one of those who had fought the thieves at Domfront, would have him into his parlour and hear the whole from his own lips. And his heart warmed to Gerard, and he said, 'God was good to thee. I thank him for 't with all my soul. Thou art a good lad.' He added dryly, 'Shouldst have told me this tale in the churchyard. I doubt I had given thee the mass for love. However,' said he (the thermometer suddenly falling), ''t is ill-luck to go back upon a bargain. But I 'll broach a bottle of my old Medoc for thee; and few be the guests I would do that for.' The curé went to his cupboard, and while he groped for the choice bottle, he muttered to himself, 'At their old tricks again!'

'Plait-il?' said Gerard.

'I said nought. Ay, here 't is.'

'Nay, your reverence. You surely spoke. You said, "At their old tricks again!"'

'Said I so, in sooth?' and his reverence

smiled. He then [illegible] and filled a cup for each. [illegible] wood on the fire, for stoves were [illegible] gundy. "And so I said [illegible] did I? Come, [illegible] lasts, story for story. [illegible] little tale."

Gerard's eyes [illegible]

"Thou lovest a story?"

"As my life."

"Nay, but raise not thine [illegible] high, neither. [illegible] compared with thine adventures."

THE CURÉ'S TALE

"Once upon a time, then, in the kingdom of France, and in the Duchy of Burgundy, and not a day's journey from the town where now we sit a-sipping of old Medoc, there lived — a cure. I say he lived, but barely. The parish was small, the parishioners greedy, and never gave their curé a doit more than he could compel. The nearer they brought him to a disembodied spirit by meagre diet, the holier should be his prayers in their behalf. I know not if this was their creed, but their practice gave it colour.

"At last he pickled a rod for them.

'One day the richest farmer in the place had twins to baptize. The curé was had to the christening dinner as usual; but ere he would baptize the children, he demanded, not the christening fees only, but the burial fees. "Saints defend us, parson," cried the mother; "talk not of burying! I did never see children liker to live." "Nor I," said the curé; "the praise be to God. Natheless, they are sure to die, — being sons of Adam as well as of thee, dame. But, die when they will, 't will cost them nothing, the burial fees being paid and entered in this book." "For all that, 't will cost them something," quoth the miller, the greatest wag in the place, and as big a knave as any; for which was the biggest God knoweth, but no mortal man, not even the hangman. "Miller, I tell thee nay," quo' the curé. "Parson, I tell you ay," quo' the miller. "'T will cost them their lives." At which millstone conceit was a great laugh; and in the general mirth the fees were paid and the Christians made.

'But when the next parishioner's child, and the next after, and all, had to pay each his burial fee or lose his place in heaven, discontent did secretly rankle in the parish. Well, one fine day they met in secret, and sent a

churchwarden with a complaint to the bishop, and a thunderbolt fell on the poor curé. Came to him at dinner-time a summons to the episcopal palace, to bring the parish books and answer certain charges. Then the curé guessed where the shoe pinched. He left his food on the board (for small his appetite now), and took the parish books, and went quaking.

'The bishop entertained him with a frown, and exposed the plaint. "Monseigneur," said the curé, right humbly, "doth the parish allege many things against me, or this one only?" "In sooth, but this one," said the bishop, and softened a little. "First, monseigneur, I acknowledge the fact." "'T is well," quoth the bishop; "that saves time and trouble. Now to your excuse, if excuse there be." "Monseigneur, I have been curé of that parish seven years, and fifty children have I baptized, and buried not five. At first I used to say, 'Heaven be praised, the air of this village is main healthy;' but on searching the register book I found 't was always so. And on probing the matter, it came out that of those born at Domfront, all, but here and there one, did go and get hanged at Aix. But this was to defraud not their curé only, but the entire Church of her dues, since *pendards* pay no funeral fees, be-

ing buried in air. Thereupon, knowing by sad experience their greed, and how they grudge the Church every sou, I laid a trap to keep them from hanging; for, greed against greed, there be of them that will die in their beds like true men, ere the Church shall gain those funeral fees for nought." Then the bishop laughed till the tears ran down, and questioned the churchwarden; and he was fain to confess that too many of the parish did come to that unlucky end at Aix. "Then," said the bishop, "I do approve the act, for myself and my successors; and so be it ever, till they mend their manners and die in their beds." And the next day came the ringleaders crestfallen to the curé, and said, "Parson, ye were ever good to us, barring this untoward matter; prithee, let there be no ill blood anent so trivial a thing." And the curé said, "My children, I were unworthy to be your pastor could I not forgive a wrong; go in peace, and get me as many children as may be, that by the double fees the curé you love may miss starvation."

'And the bishop often told the story; and it kept his memory of the curé alive, and at last he shifted him to a decent parish, where he can offer a glass of old Medoc to such as are worthy of it. Their name it is not legion.'

A light broke in upon Gerard; his countenance showed it.

'Ay!' said his host, 'I am that curé: so now thou canst guess why I said, "At their old tricks." My life on 't they have wheedled my successor into remitting those funeral fees. You are well out of that parish. And so am I.'

The curé's little niece burst in: 'Uncle, the weighing — La! a stranger!' And ran out.

The curé rose directly, but would not part with Gerard.

'Wet thy beard once more, and come with me.'

In the church porch they found the sexton with a huge pair of scales, and weights of all sizes. Several humble persons were standing by; and soon a woman stepped forward with a sickly child and said, 'Be it heavy, be it light, I vow, in rye meal of the best, whate'er this child shall weigh, and the same will duly pay to holy Church, an if he shall cast his trouble. Pray, good people, for this child, and for me his mother hither come in dole and care!'

The child was weighed, and yelled as if the scale had been the font.

'Courage! dame,' cried Gerard. 'This is a

good sign. There is plenty of life here to battle its trouble.'

'Now, blest be the tongue that tells me so,' said the poor woman. She hushed her ponderling against her bosom, and stood aloof watching, whilst another woman brought her child to scale.

But presently a loud, dictatorial voice was heard. 'Way there, make way for the seigneur!'

The small folk parted on both sides like waves ploughed by a lordly galley, and in marched in gorgeous attire, his cap adorned by a feather with a topaz at its root, his jerkin richly furred, satin doublet, red hose, shoes like skates, diamond-hilted sword in velvet scabbard, and hawk on his wrist, 'the lord of the manor.' He flung himself into the scales as if he was lord of the zodiac as well as the manor; whereat the hawk balanced and flapped, but stuck; then winked.

While the sexton heaved in the great weights, the curé told Gerard my lord had been sick unto death, and vowed his weight in bread and cheese to the poor, the Church taking her tenth.

'Permit me, my lord; if your lordship continues to press with your lordship's staff on the other scale, you will disturb the balance.'

His lordship grinned and removed his staff, and leaned on it. The curé politely but firmly objected to that too.

'Mille diables! what am I to do with it, then?' cried the other.

'Deign to hold it out so, my lord, wide of both scales.'

When my lord did this, and so fell into the trap he had laid for holy Church, the good curé whispered to Gerard, 'Cretensis incidit in Cretensem!' which I take to mean, 'Diamond cut diamond.' He then said with an obsequious air, 'If that your lordship grudges Heaven full weight, you might set the hawk on your lackey, and so save a pound.'

'Gramercy for thy rede, curé,' cried the great man, reproachfully. 'Shall I for one sorry pound grudge my poor fowl the benefit of holy Church? I 'd as lieve the devil should have me and all my house as her, any day i' the year.'

'Sweet is affection,' whispered the curé.

'Between a bird and a brute,' whispered Gerard.

'Tush!' and the curé looked terrified.

The seigneur's weight was booked, and Heaven I trust and believe did not weigh his gratitude in the balance of the sanctuary. For

my unlearned reader is not to suppose there was anything the least eccentric in the man, or his gratitude to the Giver of health and all good gifts. Men look forward to death and back upon past sickness with different eyes. Here, when men drive a bargain, they strive to get the sunny side of it; it matters not one straw whether it is with man or Heaven they are bargaining. In this respect we are the same now, at bottom, as we were four hundred years ago, — only in those days we did it a grain or two more naïvely; and that naïveté shone out more palpably, because in that rude age, body prevailing over mind, all sentiments took material forms. Man repented with scourges, prayed by bead, bribed the saints with wax tapers, put fish into the body to sanctify the soul, sojourned in cold water for empire over the emotions, and thanked God for returning health in 1 cwt. 2 stone 7 lb. 3 oz. 1 dwt. of bread and cheese.

While I have been preaching, who preach so rarely and so ill, the good curé has been soliciting the lord of the manor to step into the church, and give order what shall be done with his great-great-grandfather.

'Ods-bodikins! What! have you dug him up?'

'Nay, my lord; he never was buried.'

'What! the old dict was true after all?'

'So true that the workmen this very day found a skeleton erect in the pillar they are repairing. I had sent to my lord at once, but I knew he would be here.'

'It is he! 'T is he!' said his descendant, quickening his pace. 'Let us go see the old boy. This youth is a stranger, I think.'

Gerard bowed.

'Know then that my great-great-grandfather held his head high, and being on the point of death, revolted against lying under the aisle with his forbears for mean folk to pass over. So, as the tradition goes, he swore his son (my great-grandfather) to bury him erect in one of the pillars of the church.' Here they entered the porch. '"For," quoth he, "no base man shall pass over my stomach." Peste!' and even while speaking, his lordship parried adroitly with his stick a skull that came hopping at him, bowled by a boy in the middle of the aisle, who took to his heels yelling with fear the moment he saw what he had done. His lordship hurled the skull furiously after him as he ran, at which the curé gave a shout of dismay and put forth his arm to hinder him, but was too late.

The curé groaned aloud. And, as if this had evoked spirits of mischief, up started a whole

pack of children from some ambuscade, and unseen, but heard loud enough, clattered out of the church like a covey rising in a thick wood.

'Oh, these pernicious brats!' cried the curé. 'The workmen cannot go to their nonemete but the church is rife with them. Pray Heaven they have not found his late lordship; nay, I mind, I hid his lordship under a workman's jerkin, and — Saints defend us! the jerkin has been removed.'

The poor curé's worst misgivings were realized: the rising generation of plebeians had played the mischief with the haughty old noble. 'The little ones had jockeyed for the bones oh,' and pocketed such of them as seemed adapted for certain primitive games then in vogue among them.

'I 'll excommunicate them,' roared the curate, 'and all their race.'

'Never heed,' said the scapegrace lord, and stroked his hawk; 'there is enough of him to swear by. Put him back! put him back!'

'Surely, my lord, 't is your will his bones be laid in hallowed earth, and masses said for his poor prideful soul?'

The noble stroked his hawk.

'Are ye there, Master Curé?' said he. 'Nay, the business is too old; he is out of purgatory

by this time, *up or down.* I shall not draw my purse-strings for him. Every dog his day. Adieu, Messires; adieu, ancestor.' And he sauntered off, whistling to his hawk and caressing it.

His reverence looked ruefully after him.

'Cretensis incidit in Cretensem,' said he, sorrowfully. 'I thought I had him safe for a dozen masses. Yet I blame him not, but that young ne'er-do-weel which did trundle his ancestor's skull at us; for who could venerate his great-great-grandsire and play football with his head? Well, it behooves us to be better Christians than he is.'

So they gathered the bones reverently, and the curé locked them up, and forbade the workmen, who now entered the church, to close up the pillar till he should recover by threats of the Church's wrath every atom of my lord. And he showed Gerard a famous shrine in the church. Before it were the usual gifts of tapers, etc. There was also a wax image of a falcon, most curiously moulded and coloured to the life, eyes and all. Gerard's eye fell at once on this, and he expressed the liveliest admiration. The curé assented. Then Gerard asked, 'Could the saint have loved hawking?'

The curé laughed at his simplicity. 'Nay,

't is but a statuary hawk. When they have a bird of gentle breed they cannot train, they make his image, and send it to this shrine with a present, and pray the saint to work upon the stubborn mind of the original, and make it ductile as wax. That is the notion, and methinks a reasonable one, too.'

Gerard assented. 'But alack! reverend sir, were I a saint, methinks I should side with the innocent dove rather than with the cruel hawk that rends her.'

'By Saint Denys you are right,' said the curé. 'But, que voulez-vous? the saints are débonair, and have been flesh themselves, and know man's frailty and absurdity. 'T is the Bishop of Avignon sent this one.

'What! Do bishops hawk in this country?'

'One and all. Every noble person hawks, and lives with hawk on wrist. Why, my lord abbot hard by, and his lordship that has just parted from us, had a two years' feud as to where they should put their hawks down on that very altar there. Each claimed the right hand of the altar for his bird.'

'What desecration!'

'Nay! nay! Thou knowest we make them doff both glove and hawk to take the blessed eucharist. Their jewelled gloves will they give

to a servant or simple Christian to bow; but their beloved hawks they will put down on no place less than the altar.'

Gerard inquired how the battle of the hawks ended.

'Why, the abbot he yielded, as the Church yields to laymen. He searched ancient books, and found that the left hand was the more honourable, being in truth the right hand, since the altar is east, but looks westward. So he gave my lord the soi-disant right hand, and contented himself with the real right hand: and even so may the Church still outwit the lay nobles and their arrogance, saving your presence.'

'Nay, sir, I honour the Church. I am convent-bred, and owe all I have and am to holy Church.'

'Ah, that accounts for my sudden liking to thee. Art a gracious youth. Come and see me whenever thou wilt.'

Gerard took this as a hint that he might go now. It jumped with his own wish, for he was curious to hear what Denys had seen and done all this time. He made his reverence and walked out of the church; but was no sooner clear of it than he set off to run with all his might, and, tearing round a corner, ran into a large stomach,

whose owner clutched him to keep himself steady under the shock, but did not release his hold on regaining his equilibrium.

'Let go, man,' said Gerard.

'Not so. You are my prisoner.'

'Prisoner?'

'Ay.'

'What for, in heaven's name?'

'What for? Why, sorcery.'

'Sorcery?'

'Sorcery.'

CHAPTER X

THE culprits were condemned to stand pilloried in the market-place for two hours, that should any persons recognize them or any of them as guilty of other crimes they might depose to that effect at the trial.

They stood however the whole period, and no one advanced anything fresh against them. This was the less remarkable that they were night-birds, — vampires who preyed in the dark on weary travellers, mostly strangers. But yet as they were being taken down, a loud hiss was heard in the crowd, and a woman pointed at one of them, with eyes almost starting from their sockets; but ere she could speak she fainted away.

Then men and women crowded round her partly to aid her, partly from curiosity. When she began to recover they fell to conjecture.

'T was at him she pointed.'

'Nay, 't was at this one.'

'Nay, nay,' said another; ''t was at yon hangdog with the hair hung round his neck.'

All further conjecture was cut short. The poor creature no sooner recovered her senses than she flew at the landlord like a lioness. 'My child! Man! man! Give me back my child!' And she seized the glossy golden hair that the officers had hung round his neck, and tore it from his neck, and covered it with kisses; then, her poor confused mind clearing, she saw even by this token that her lost girl was dead, and sank suddenly down shrieking and sobbing so over the poor hair that the crowd rushed on the assassin with one savage growl. His life had ended then and speedily, for in those days all carried death at their girdles; but Denys drew his sword directly, and shouting, 'A moi, camarades!' kept the mob at bay. 'Who lays a finger on him dies.' Other archers backed him, and with some difficulty they kept him uninjured, while Denys appealed to those who shouted for his blood.

'What sort of vengeance is this? Would you be so mad as rob the wheel, and give the vermin an easy death?'

The mob was kept passive by the archers' steel rather than by Denys's words, and growled at intervals with flashing eyes. The municipal

officers seeing this, collected round, and with the archers made a guard, and prudently carried the accused back to jail.

The mob hooted them and the prisoners indiscriminately. Denys saw the latter safely lodged, then made for the White Hart, where he expected to find Gerard. On the way he saw two girls working at a first-floor window. He saluted them. They smiled. He entered into conversation. Their manners were easy, their complexion high. He invited them to a repast at the White Hart. They objected. He acquiesced in their refusal. They consented. And in this charming society he forgot all about poor Gerard, who meantime was carried off to jail; but on the way suddenly stopped, having now somewhat recovered his presence of mind, and demanded to know by whose authority he was arrested. 'By the vice-bailie's,' said the constable.

'The vice-bailie! Alas! what have I, a stranger, done to offend a vice-bailie? For this charge of sorcery must be a blind. No sorcerer am I, but a poor true lad far from his home.'

This vague shift disgusted the officer. 'Show him the capias, Jacques,' said he.

Jacques held out the writ in both hands about

a yard and a half from Gerard's eye; and at the same moment the large constable suddenly pinned him. Both officers were on tenter-hooks lest the prisoner should grab the document, to which they attached a superstitious importance.

But the poor prisoner had no such thought. Query whether he would have touched it with the tongs. He just craned out his neck and read it, and, to his infinite surprise, found the vice-bailiff who had signed the writ was the friendly alderman. He took courage and assured his captor there was some error; but finding he made no impression, demanded to be taken before the alderman.

'What say you to that, Jacques?'

'Impossible. We have no orders to take him before his worship. Read the writ!'

'Nay, but good kind fellows, what harm can it be? I will give ye each an écu.'

'Jacques, what say you to that?'

'Humph! I say we have no orders not to take him to his worship. Read the writ!'

'Then say we take him to prison round by his worship.'

It was agreed. They got the money, and bade Gerard observe they were doing him a favour. He saw they wanted a little gratitude as well as much silver. He tried to satisfy *this*

cupidity, but it stuck in his throat. Feigning was not his forte.

He entered the alderman's presence with his heart in his mouth, and begged with faltering voice to know what he had done to offend since he left that very room with Manon and Denys.

'Nought that I know of,' said the alderman.

On the writ being shown him, he told Gerard he had signed it at daybreak. 'I get old, and my memory faileth me. A discussing of the girl, I quite forgot your own offence; but I remember now. All is well. You are he I committed for sorcery. Stay! Ere you go to jail, you shall hear what your accuser says. Run and fetch him, you.'

The man could not find the accuser all at once. So the alderman, getting impatient, told Gerard the main charge was that he had set a dead body a-burning with diabolical fire that flamed, but did not consume. 'And if 't is true young man, I 'm sorry for thee; for thou wilt assuredly burn with fire of good pine logs in the market-place of Neufchasteau.'

'Oh, sir, for pity's sake let me have speech with his reverence the curé.'

The alderman advised Gerard against it. The Church was harder upon sorcerers than was the corporation.

'But, sir, I am innocent,' said Gerard, between snarling and whining.

'Oh; if *you* — *think* — you are *innocent* — Officer, go with him to the curé! but see he 'scape you not. Innocent, quotha!'

They found the curé in his doublet repairing a wheelbarrow. Gerard told him all, and appealed piteously to him. 'Just for using a little phosphorus — in self-defence — against cutthroats they are going to hang.'

It was lucky for our magician that he had already told his tale in full to the curé; for thus that shrewd personage had hold of the stick at the right end. The corporation held it by the ferule. His reverence looked exceedingly grave and said, 'I must question you privately on this untoward business.' He took him into a private room and bade the officer stand outside and guard the door, and be ready to come if called. The big constable stood outside the door, quaking, and expecting to see the room fly away and leave a stink of brimstone. Instantly they were alone the curé unlocked his countenance and was himself again.

'Show me the trick on 't,' said he, all curiosity.

'I cannot sir, unless the room be darkened.'

The curé speedily closed out the light with a wooden shutter. 'Now, then.'

'But on what shall I put it?' said Gerard. 'Here is no dead face. 'T was that made it look so dire.'

The curé groped about the room.

'Good! Here is an image, — 't is my patron saint.'

'Heaven forbid! That were profanation.'

'Pshaw! 't will rub off, will 't not?'

'Ay; but it goes against me to take such liberty with a saint,' objected the sorcerer.

'Fiddlestick!' said the divine.

'To be sure, my putting it on his holiness will show your reverence it is no Satanic art.'

'Mayhap 't was for that I did propose it,' said the curé, subtly.

Thus encouraged, Gerard fired the eyes and nostrils of the image and made the curé jump; then lighted up the hair in patches, and set the whole face shining like a glowworm's.

'By 'r Lady,' shouted the curé, '' t is strange! And small my wonder that they took you for a magician, seeing a dead face thus fired. Now come thy ways with me!'

He put on his gray gown and great hat, and in a few minutes they found themselves in presence of the alderman. By his side, poisoning his mind, stood the accuser, — a singular figure

in red hose and red shoes, a black gown with blue bands, and a cocked hat.

After saluting the alderman, the curé turned to this personage and said good-humouredly, 'So, Mangis, at thy work again, babbling away honest men's lives! Come, your worship, this is the old tale: two of a trade can ne'er agree. Here is Mangis, who professes sorcery, and would sell himself to Satan to-night, but that Satan is not so weak as buy what he can have gratis, — this Mangis, who would be a sorcerer, but is only a quacksalver, accuses of magic a true lad, who did but use in self-defence a secret of chemistry, well known to me and to all churchmen.'

'But he is no churchman, to dabble in such mysteries,' objected the alderman.

'He is more churchman than layman, being convent-bred, and in the lesser orders,' said the ready curé. 'Therefore, sorcerer, withdraw thy plaint without more words!'

'That will I not, your reverence,' replied Mangis, stoutly. 'A sorcerer I am, but a white one, not a black one. I make no pact with Satan, but on the contrary still battle him with lawful and necessary arts. I ne'er profane the sacraments, as do the black sorcerers, nor turn myself into a cat and go sucking infants' blood,

nor e'en their breath, nor set dead men o' fire. I but tell the peasants when their cattle and their hens are possessed, and at what time of the moon to plant rye, and what days in each month are lucky for wooing of women and selling of bullocks, and so forth; above all, it is my art and my trade to detect the black magicians, as I did that whole tribe of them who were burnt at Dol but last year.'

'Ay, Mangis. And what is the upshot of that famous fire thy tongue did kindle?'

'Why, their ashes were cast to the wind.'

'Ay. But the true end of thy comedy is this: The parliament of Dijon hath since sifted the matter, and found they were no sorcerers, but good and peaceful citizens; and but last week did order masses to be said for their souls, and expiatory farces and mysteries to be played for them in seven towns of Burgundy. All which will not of those cinders make men and women again. Now, 't is our custom in this land, when we have slain the innocent by hearkening false knaves like thee, not to blame our credulous ears, but the false tongue that gulled them. Wherefore bethink thee that, at a word from me to my lord bishop, thou wilt smell burning pine nearer than e'er knave smelt it and lived, and wilt travel on a smoky cloud to him

whose heart thou bearest (for the word devil in the Latin it meaneth "false accuser"), and whose livery thou wearest.'

And the curé pointed at Mangis with his staff.

'That is true, i' fegs,' said the alderman; 'for red and black be the foul fiendys colours.'

By this time the white sorcerer's cheek was as colourless as his dress was fiery. Indeed the contrast amounted to pictorial. He stammered out, 'I respect holy Church and her will; he shall fire the churchyard, and all in it, for me. I do withdraw the plaint.'

'Then withdraw thyself,' said the vice-bailiff.

The moment he was gone, the curé took the conversational tone, and told the alderman courteously that the accused had received the chemical substance from holy Church, and had restored it her, by giving it all to him.

'Then 't is in good hands,' was the reply. 'Young man, you are free. Let me have your reverence's prayers.'

'Doubt it not! Humph! Vice-bailie, the town owes me four silver francs, this three months and more.'

'They shall be paid, curé, — ay, ere the week be out.'

On this good understanding Church and State parted.

As soon as he was in the street Gerard caught the priest's hand and kissed it. 'Oh, sir! Oh, your reverence! You have saved me from the fiery stake. What can I say? what do? what—'

'Nought, foolish lad. Bounty rewards itself. Natheless— Humph! I wish I had some: without leasing. It ill-becomes my function to utter falsehoods.'

'Falsehood, sir?' Gerard was mystified.

'Didst not hear me say thou hadst given me that same phosphorus? 'Twill cost me a fortnight's penance, that light word.' The cure sighed, and his eye twinkled comically.

'Nay, nay,' cried Gerard, eagerly. 'Now Heaven forbid! That was no falsehood, father. Well you knew the phosphorus was yours, as yours;' and he thrust the bottle into the cure's hand. 'But alas! 't is too poor a gift. Will you not take from my purse somewhat for holy Church?' and now he held out his purse with glistening eyes.

'Nay,' said the other, brusquely, and put his hands quickly behind him; 'not a doit. Fie! fie! art pauper et exul. Come thou rather each day at noon and take thy diet with me, for my heart warms to thee;' and he went off very abruptly with his hands behind him.

They itched; but they itched in vain. Where there 's a heart there 's a Rubicon.

Gerard went hastily to the inn to relieve Denys of the anxiety so long and mysterious an absence must have caused him. He found him seated at his ease, playing dice with two young ladies whose manners were unreserved, and complexion high.

Gerard was hurt. 'N'oubliez point la Jeanneton!' said he, colouring up.

'What of her?' said Denys, gayly rattling the dice.

'She said, "Le peu que sont les femmes."'

'Oh, did she? And what say you to that, mesdemoiselles?'

'We say that none run women down but such as are too old or too ill-favoured or too witless to please them.'

'Witless, quotha. Wise men have not folly enough to please them, nor madness enough to desire to please them,' said Gerard, loftily; 'but 'tis to my comrade I speak, not to you, you brazen toads that make so free with a man at first sight.'

'Preach away, comrade. Fling a byword or two at our heads. Know, girls, that he is a very Solomon for bywords. Methinks he was brought up by hand on 'em.'

'Be thy friendship a byword!' retorted Gerard. 'The friendship that melts to nought at sight of a farthingale.'

'Malheureux!' cried Denys; 'I speak but pellets, and thou answerest daggers.'

'Would I could,' was the reply. 'Adieu.'

'What a little savage!' said one of the girls.

Gerard opened the door and put in his head. 'I have thought of a byword,' said he, spitefully:—

> '"Qui hante femmes et dez
> Il mourra en pauvretez."

There!' And having delivered this thunderbolt of antique wisdom he slammed the door viciously ere any of them could retort.

And now, being somewhat exhausted by his anxieties, he went to the bar for a morsel of bread and a cup of wine. The landlord would sell nothing less than a pint bottle. Well, then he would have a bottle; but, when he came to compare the contents of the bottle with its size, great was the discrepancy. On this he examined the bottle keenly, and found that the glass was thin where the bottle tapered, but toward the bottom unnaturally thick. He pointed this out at once.

The landlord answered superciliously that he

did not make bottles, and was nowise accountable for their shape.

'That we will see presently,' said Gerard. 'I will take this thy pint to the vice-bailiff.'

'Nay, nay, for Heaven's sake,' cried the landlord, changing his tone at once. 'I love to content my customers. If by chance this pint be short, we will charge it and its fellow three sous, instead of two sous each.'

'So be it. But much I admire that you, the host of so fair an inn, should practise thus. The wine too smacketh strongly of spring-water.'

'Young sir,' said the landlord, 'we cut no travellers' throats at this inn, as they do at most. However, you know all about that. The White Hart is no lion nor bear. Whatever masterful robbery is done here, is done upon the poor host. How, then, could he live at all if he dealt not a little crooked with the few who pay?'

Gerard objected to this system root and branch. Honest trade, with small profits, quick returns; and neither to cheat nor to be cheated.

The landlord sighed at this picture. 'So might one keep an inn in heaven, but not in Burgundy. When foot-soldiers going to the wars are quartered on me, how can I but lose

by their custom? Two sous per day is their pay, and they eat two sous' worth, and drink into the bargain. The pardoners are my good friends; but palmers and pilgrims, what think you I gain by them? marry, a loss. Minstrels and jongleurs draw custom, and so claim to pay no score, except for liquor. By the secular monks I neither gain nor lose; but the black and gray friars have made vow of poverty but not of famine, eat like wolves, and give the poor host nought but their prayers, and mayhap not them. How can he tell? In my father's day we had the weddings; but now the great gentry let their houses and their plates, their mugs and their spoons, to any honest couple that want to wed, and thither the very mechanics go with their brides and bridal train. They come not to us. Indeed we could not find seats and vessels for such a crowd as eat and drink and dance the week out at the homeliest wedding now. In my father's day the great gentry sold wine by the barrel only; but now they have leave to cry it, and sell it by the galopin, in the very market-place. How can we vie with them? They grow it. We buy it of the grower. The coroner's quests we have still, and these would bring goodly profit, but the meat is aye gone ere the mouths be full.'

'You should make better provision,' suggested his hearer.

'The law will not let us. We are forbidden to go into the market for the first hour. So when we arrive, the burghers have bought all but the refuse. Besides, the law forbids us to buy more than three bushels of meal at a time; yet market day comes but once a week. As for the butchers, they will not kill for us unless we bribe them.'

'Courage!' said Gerard, kindly, 'the shoe pinches every trader somewhere.'

'Ay; but not as it pinches us. Our shoe is trod all o' one side as well as pinches us lame,—à savoir, if we pay not the merchants we buy meal, meat, and wine of, they can cast us into prison and keep us there till we pay or die; but we cannot cast into prison those who buy those very victuals of us. A traveller's horse we may keep for his debt; but where, in Heaven's name? In our own stable, eating his head off at our cost. Nay, we may keep the traveller himself; but where? In jail? Nay; in our own good house, and there must we lodge and feed him gratis. And so fling good silver after bad? Merci! No; let him go with a wanion. Our honestest customers are the thieves. Would to Heaven there were more of them. They look

not too close into the shape of the canakin, nor into the host's reckoning. With them and with their purses 't is lightly come, and lightly go. Also they spend freely, not knowing but each carouse may be their last. But the thief-takers, instead of profiting by this fair example, are forever robbing the poor host. When noble or honest travellers descend at our door, come the provost's men pretending to suspect them, and demanding to search them and their papers. To save which offence the host must bleed wine and meat. Then come the excise to examine all your weights and measures. You must stop their mouths with meat and wine. Town excise, royal excise, Parliament excise, — a swarm of them; and all with a wolf in their stomachs and a sponge in their gullets. Monks, friars, pilgrims, palmers, soldiers, excisemen, provost-marshals and men, and mere bad debtors, how can the White Hart butt against all these? Cutting no throats in self-defence as do your Swans and Roses and Boar's Heads and Red Lions and Eagles, your Moons, Stars, and Moors, how can the White Hart give a pint of wine for a pint, — and everything risen so? Why, lad, not a pound of bread I sell but costs me three good copper deniers, twelve to the sou; and each pint of wine, bought by the tun,

costs me four deniers; every sack of charcoal, two sous, and gone in a day. A pair of partridges, five sous. What think you of that? Heard one ever the like? Five sous for two little beasts all bone and feather! A pair of pigeons, thirty deniers. 'T is ruination! For we may not raise *our* pricen with the market. Oh, no! I tell thee the shoe is trod all o' one side as well as pinches the water into our eyn. We may charge nought for mustard, pepper, salt, or firewood. Think you we get them for nought? Candle, it is a sou the pound; salt, five sous the stone; pepper four sous the pound; mustard, twenty deniers the pint; and raw meat, dwindleth it on the spit with no cost to me but loss of weight? Why, what think you I pay my cook? But you shall never guess. A hundred sous a year as I am a living sinner! And my waiter, thirty sous, besides his perquisites. He is a hantle richer than I am. And then to be insulted as well as pillaged!

'Last Sunday I went to church. It is a place I trouble not often. Did n't the curé lash the hotel-keepers? I grant you he hit all the trades, except the one that is a byword for looseness and pride and sloth, — to wit, the clergy. But, mind you, he stripeit the other lay estates with a feather, but us hotel-keepers with a neat's pizzle:

godless for this, godless for that, and most godless of all for opening our doors during mass. Why, the law forces us to open at all hours to travellers from another town, stopping, halting, or passing, — those be the words. They can fine us before the bailiff if we refuse them, mass or no mass; and say a townsman should creep in with the true travellers, are we to blame? They all vow they are tired wayfarers; and can I ken every face in a great town like this? So if we respect the law, our poor souls are to suffer; and if we respect it not, our poor lank purses must bleed at two holes, — fine and loss of custom.'

A man speaking of himself, in general, is 'a babbling brook;' of his wrongs, 'a shining river.'

'Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.'

So, luckily for my readers, though not for all concerned, this injured orator was arrested in mid career. Another man burst in upon his wrongs with all the advantage of a recent wrong, — a wrong red hot. It was Denys, cursing and swearing, and crying that he was robbed.

'Did those hussies pass this way? Who are they? Where do they bide? They have ta'en

my purse and fifteen golden pieces. Raise the hue and cry! ah, traitresses! vipers! These inns are all guetapens.'

'There now,' cried the landlord to Gerard.

Gerard implored him to be calm and say how it had befallen.

'First one went out on some pretence, then after a while the other went to fetch her back; and, neither returning, I clapped hand to purse and found it empty. The ungrateful creatures! I was letting them win it in a gallop: but loaded dice were not quick enough; they must claw it all in a lump.'

Gerard was for going at once to the alderman and setting the officers to find them.

'Not I,' said Denys. 'I hate the law. No; as it came, so let it go.'

Gerard would not give it up so.

At a hint from the landlord he forced Denys along with him to the provost-marshal. That dignitary shook his head. 'We have no clew to occasional thieves that work honestly at their needles till some gull comes and tempts them with an easy booty, and then they pluck him.'

'Come away,' cried Denys, furiously. 'I knew what use a bourgeois would be to me at a pinch;' and he marched off in a rage.

'They are clear of the town ere this,' said Gerard.

'Speak no more on 't if you prize my friendship. I have five pieces with the bailiff, and ten I left with Marion, luckily, or these traitresses had feathered their nest with my last plume. What dost gape for so? Nay, I do ill to vent my choler on thee; I 'll tell thee all. Art wiser than I. What saidst thou at the door? No matter. Well, then, I did offer marriage to that Marion.'

Gerard was dumbfounded.

'What? You offered her what?'

'Marriage. Is that such a mighty strange thing to offer a wench?'

''T is a strange thing to offer to a strange girl in passing.'

'Nay, I am not such a sot as you opine. I saw the corn in all that chaff. I knew I could not get her by fair means, so I was fain to try foul. "Mademoiselle," said I, "marriage is not one of my habits, but struck by your qualities I make an exception. Deign to bestow this hand on me."'

'And she bestowed it on thine ear.'

'Not so. On the contrary she — Art a disrespectful young monkey! Know that here, not being Holland or any other barbarous state,

courtesy begets courtesy. Says she a-colouring like a rose, "Soldier you are too late. He is not a patch on you for looks, but then — he has loved me a long time." "He? Who?" "T' other." "What other?" "Why he that was not too late." Oh, that is the way they all speak, the loves, the she-wolves. Their little minds go in leaps. Think you they marshal their words in order of battle? Their tongues are in too great a hurry. Says she, "I love him not, — not to say *love* him; but he does me, and dearly; and for that reason I 'd sooner die than cause him grief, I would."'

'Now, I believe she did love him.'

'Who doubts that? Why she said so, roundabout, as they always say these things, and with "nay" for "ay." "I hope you will be happy together," said I.

'Well one thing led to another, and at last as she could not give me her hand, she gave me a piece of advice, and that was to leave part of my money with the young mistress. Then, when bad company had cleaned me out, I should have some to travel back with, said she. I said I would better her advice, and leave it with her. Her face got red. Says she, "Think what you do. Chambermaids have an ill name for honesty." "Oh, the devil is not so black

as he is painted," said I. "I 'll risk it;" and I left ten gold pieces with her.'

Gerard sighed. 'I wish you may ever see them again. It is wondrous in what esteem you do hold this sex, to trust so to the first comer. For my part I know little about them; I never saw but one I could love as well as I love thee. But the ancients must surely know; and they held women cheap. "Levius quid fœminâ," said they, — which is but la Jeanneton's tune in Latin, "Le peu que sont les femmes." Also do but see how the graybeards of our own day speak of them, being no longer blinded by desire: this alderman to wit.'

'Oh, novice of novices,' cried Denys, 'not to have seen why that old fool rails so on the poor things! One day, out of the millions of women he blackens, one did prefer some other man to him; for which solitary piece of bad taste (and ten to one 't was good taste), he doth bespatter creation's fairer half, thereby proving what? — le peu que sont les hommes.'

'I see women have a shrewd champion in thee,' said Gerard, with a smile; but the next moment inquired gravely why he had not told him all this before.

Denys grinned. 'Had the girl said, "Ay," why then I had told thee straight. But 't is a

rule with us soldiers never to publish our defeats; 't is much if after each check we claim not a victory.'

'Now, that is true,' said Gerard. 'Young as I am, I have seen this: that after every great battle the generals on both sides go to the nearest church and sing each a Te Deum for the victory. Methinks a Te Martem, or Te Bellonam, or Te Mercurium, — Mercury being the God of lies, — were more fitting.'

'Pas si bête,' said Denys, approvingly. 'Hast a good eye: canst see a steeple by daylight. So now tell me how thou hast fared in this town all day.'

'Come,' said Gerard, 't is well thou hast asked me, for else I had never told thee.' He then related in full how he had been arrested, and by what a providential circumstance he had escaped long imprisonment or speedy conflagration.

His narrative produced an effect he little expected or desired. 'I am a traitor,' cried Denys. 'I left thee in a strange place to fight thine own battles, while I shook the dice with those jades. Now take thou this sword and pass it through my body forthwith.'

'What for, in Heaven's name?' inquired Gerard.

'For an example,' roared Denys. 'For a warning to all false loons that profess friendship, and disgrace it.'

'Oh, very well,' said Gerard. 'Yes. Not a bad notion. Where will you have it?'

'Here, through my heart, — that is, where other men have a heart, but I none, or a satanic false one.'

Gerard made a motion to run him through, and flung his arms round his neck instead. 'I know no way to thy heart but this, thou great silly thing.'

Denys uttered an exclamation, then hugged him warmly, and quite overcome by this sudden turn of youthful affection and native grace, gulped out in a broken voice: 'Railest on women — and art — like them — with thy pretty ways. Thy mother's milk is in thee still. Satan would love thee, or — le bon Dieu would kick him out of hell for shaming it. Give me thy hand! Give me thy hand! May' — a tremendous oath — 'if I let thee out of my sight till Italy.'

And so the stanch friends were more than reconciled after their short tiff.

The next day the thieves were tried. The *pièces de conviction* were reduced in number, to the great chagrin of the little clerk, by the inter-

ment of the bones; but there was still a pretty show, — a thief's hand struck off *flagrante delicto;* a murdered woman's hair; the Abbot's axe, and other tools of crime. The skulls etc. were sworn to by the constables who had found them. Evidence was lax in that age and place. They all confessed but the landlord; and Manon was called to bring the crime home to him. Her evidence was conclusive. He made a vain attempt to shake her credibility by drawing from her that her own sweetheart had been one of the gang, and that she had held her tongue so long as he was alive. The public prosecutor came to the aid of his witness, and elicited that a knife had been held to her throat, and her own sweetheart sworn with solemn oaths to kill her should she betray them, and that this terrible threat, and not the mere fear of death, had glued her lips.

The other thieves were condemned to be hanged, and the landlord to be broken on the wheel. He uttered a piercing cry when his sentence was pronounced.

As for poor Manon, she became the subject of universal criticism. Nor did opinion any longer run dead in her favour; it divided into two broad currents. And, strange to relate, the majority of her own sex took her part, and the

men were but equally divided, — which hardly happens once in a hundred years. Perhaps some lady will explain the phenomenon. As for me, I am a little shy of explaining things I don't understand, — it has become so common. Meantime, had she been a lover of notoriety, she would have been happy; for the town talked of nothing but her. The poor girl however had but one wish, — to escape the crowd that followed her, and hide her head somewhere where she could cry over her *pendard*, whom all these proceedings brought vividly back to her affectionate remembrance. Before he was hanged he had threatened her life: but she was not one of your fastidious girls who love their male divinities any the less for beating them, kicking them, or killing them, but rather the better, provided these attentions are interspersed with occasional caresses; so it would have been odd indeed had she taken offence at a mere threat of that sort. He had never threatened her with a rival. She sobbed single-mindedly.

Meantime the inn was filled with thirsters for a sight of her, who feasted and drank, to pass away the time till she should deign to appear. When she had been sobbing some time, there was a tap at her door, and the landlord

entered with a proposal. 'Nay, weep not, good lass; your fortune, it is made an you like. Say the word, and you are chambermaid of the White Hart.'

'Nay, nay,' said Manon, with a fresh burst of grief. 'Never more will I be a servant in an inn. I 'll go to my mother.'

The landlord consoled and coaxed her, and she became calmer, but none the less determined against his proposal.

The landlord left her. But ere long he returned and made her another proposal. Would she be his wife, and landlady of the White Hart?

'You do ill to mock me,' said she, sorrowfully.

'Nay, sweetheart. I mock thee not. I am too old for sorry jests. Say you the word, and you are my partner for better for worse.'

She looked at him and saw he was in earnest. On this she suddenly rained hard to the memory of *le pendard* (the tears came in a torrent being the last); and she gave her hand to the landlord of the White Hart, and broke a gold crown with him in sign of plighted troth.

'We will keep it dark till the house is quiet,' said the landlord.

'Ay,' said she. 'But meantime prithee give me linen to hem, or work to do; for the time hangs on me like lead.'

Her betrothed's eye brightened at this housewifely request, and he brought her up two [illegible] flagons of various sizes to clean and polish. [illegible] gathered complacency as she reflected that [illegible] a strange turn of fortune all this bright [illegible] was to be hers.

And this mighty furbishing up of [illegible] minds me that justice requires me to [illegible] of the same work.

Well then, the deposition, read [illegible] derman's room as Manon's, was not [illegible] such things ought to be. The [illegible] condensed her evidence. Now, there [illegible] every great nation about three [illegible] of condensing evidence without [illegible] but this alderman was not one of [illegible] band. In the first part of the [illegible] left out as unimportant these words: 'My mother advised me to keep out of his way [illegible] his wrath should cool.' Between the words 'jealous of me' and 'the reason' Manon had said, 'My master was aye at my heels; so I told my mistress, and said I would rather go than be cause of mischief.' This the alderman suppressed as mere babble, whereas it was a worthy trait. He also let slip the word 'afterward' in the next sentence. Manon had said the reason they gave *afterward*, — that is, 'when

I was no longer there to contradict them.' And so on all through the deposition.

Sometimes the deponent suffered as many a one does now-a-days, in the newspaper and other reports, by the mere suppression of the question. For instance this is what actually was said: —

The Alderman. 'Come now, should you have interfered if this soldier had had no beard?'

Manon. 'How can I tell what I *should* have done?'

Now, this was merely a sensible answer to a monstrous question no magistrate had a right to put; but under the condensing process, behold her saddled with a volunteer statement of a very damaging character.

Finally she had said, 'I am sorry I told, if I am to be hanged for it.'

This the old boy condensed (*ut supra*, p. 122), anticipating as far as possible the tuneful Sinclair.[1]

[1] Sinclair was a singer, and complained to the manager that in the operatic play of 'Rob Roy' he had a multitude of mere words to utter between the songs. 'Cut, my boy, cut!' said the manager. On this *vox et p. n.* cut Scott; and doubtless many of his cuts would not have discredited the condensers of evidence. But only one of his master-strokes has reached posterity. His melodious organs had been taxed with this sentence:

Whilst Manon and I were cleaning, she her coming, I my parting, pewter, the landlord went downstairs, and falling in with our friends drew them aside into the bar.

He then addressed Denys with considerable solemnity. 'We are old acquaintances, and you want not for sagacity. Now, advise me in a strait. My custom is somewhat declining: this girl Manon is the talk of the town. See how full the inn is to-night. She doth refuse to be my chambermaid. I have half a mind to marry her. What think you? Shall I say the word?'

Denys in reply merely opened his eyes wide with amazement.

The landlord turned to Gerard with a half-inquiring look.

'Nay, sir,' said Gerard. 'I am too young to advise my seniors and betters.'

'No matter. Let us hear your thought.'

'Well, sir, it was said of a good wife by the ancients "bene quæ latuit, bene vixit,"—that is, she is the best wife that is least talked of; but here *male quæ patuit* were as near the

'Rashleigh is my cousin; but, for what reason I cannot divine, he is my bitterest enemy.' This he condensed and delivered thus: 'Rashleigh is my cousin, but for what reason I cannot divine.'

mark. Therefore, an you bear the lass good-will, why not club purses with Denys and me and convey her safe home with a dowry? Then mayhap some rustical person in her own place may be brought to wive her.'

'Why so many words?' said Denys. 'This old fox is not the ass he affects to be.'

'Oh, that is your advice, is it?' said the landlord, testily. 'Well, then, we shall soon know who is the fool, you or me; for I have spoken to her as it happens. And what is more, she has said "Ay;" and she is polishing the flagons at this moment.'

'Oho!' said Denys, dryly, ''t was an ambuscade. Well, in that case my advice is, run for the notary, tie the noose, and let us three drink the bride's health till we see six sots a-tippling.'

'And shall. Ay, now you utter sense.'

In ten minutes a civil marriage was effected upstairs before a notary and his clerk and our two friends. In ten minutes more the white hind, dead sick of seclusion, had taken her place within the bar, and was serving out liquids, and bustling, and her colour rising a little. In six minutes more she soundly rated a careless servant-girl for carrying a nipperkin of wine awry and spilling good liquor. During the

evening she received across the bar eight offers of marriage, — some of them from respectable burghers.

Now, the landlord and our two friends had in perfect innocence ensconced themselves behind a screen, to drink at their ease the new couple's health. The above comedy was thrown in for their entertainment by bounteous fate. They heard the proposals made one after another, and uninventive Manon's invariable answer: 'Serviteur, you are a day after the fair.' The landlord chuckled, and looked good-natured superiority at both his late advisers, with their traditional notions that men shun a woman *quæ patuit*, — that is, who has become the town talk.

But Denys scarce noticed the spouse's triumph over him, he was so occupied with his own over Gerard. At each municipal tender of undying affection he turned almost purple with the effort it cost him not to roar with glee, and driving his elbow into the deep-meditating and much puzzled pupil of antiquity, whispered, 'Le peu que sont les hommes.'

The next morning Gerard was eager to start, but Denys was under a vow to see the murderers of the golden-haired girl executed.

Gerard respected his vow, but avoided his example. He went to bid the curé farewell in-

stead, and sought and received his blessing. About noon the travellers got clear of the town. Just outside the south gate they passed the gallows; it had eight tenants, — the skeleton of Manon's late wept, and now being fast forgotten, lover, and the bodies of those who had so nearly taken our travellers' lives. A hand was nailed to the beam. And hard by on a huge wheel was clawed the dead landlord, with every bone in his body broken to pieces.

Gerard averted his head and hurried by. Denys lingered, and crowed over his dead foes. 'Times are changed, my lads, since we two sat shaking in the cold awaiting you seven to come and cut our throats.'

'Fie, Denys! Death squares all reckonings. Prithee pass on without another word, if you prize my respect a groat.'

To this earnest remonstrance Denys yielded. He even said thoughtfully, 'You have been better brought up than I.'

About three in the afternoon they reached a little town with the people buzzing in knots. The wolves, starved by the cold, had entered, and eaten two grown-up persons overnight, in the main street: so some were blaming the eaten, — 'none but fools or knaves are about after nightfall;' others the law for not protect-

ing the town, and others the corporation for not enforcing what laws there were.

'Bah! this is nothing to us,' said Denys, and was for resuming their march.

'Ay, but 't is,' remonstrated Gerard.

'What! are we the pair they ate?'

'No; but we may be the next pair.'

'Ay, neighbour,' said an ancient man; 'it is the town's fault for not obeying the ducal ordinance, which bids every shopkeeper light a lamp o'er his door at sunset, and burn it till sunrise.'

On this Denys asked him somewhat derisively what made him fancy rush dips would scare away empty wolves? 'Why, mutton fat is all their joy.'

'T is not the fat, vain man, but the light. All ill things hate light, — especially wolves and the imps that lurk, I ween, under their fur. Example: Paris city stands in a wood like, and the wolves do howl around it all night; yet of late years wolves come but little in the street. For why, in that burgh the watchmen do thunder at each door that is dark, and make the weary wight rise and light. 'T is my [illegible] to me. He is a great voyager, my [illegible]

In further explanation he assured them [illegible] previously to that ordinance [illegible]

worse infested with wolves than Paris; a troop had boldly assaulted the town in 1420; and in 1438 they had eaten fourteen persons in a single month between Montmartre and the gate St. Antoine, and that not a winter month even, but September. And as for the dead, which nightly lay in the streets slain in midnight brawls, or assassinated, the wolves had used to devour them, and to grub up the fresh graves in the churchyards and tear out the bodies.

Here a thoughtful citizen suggested that probably the wolves had been bridled of late in Paris, not by candle-lights, but owing to the English having been driven out of the kingdom of France. 'For those English be very wolves themselves for fierceness and greediness. What marvel then that under their rule our neighbours of France should be wolf-eaten?' This logic was too suited to the time and place not to be received with acclamation.

But the old man stood his ground. 'I grant ye those islanders are wolves; but two-legged ones, and little apt to favour their four-footed cousins. One greedy thing, loveth it another? I trow not. By the same token (and this too I have from my boy Nicole), Sir Wolf dare not show his nose in London city, though 't is smaller than Paris, and thick woods hard by the

north [illegible]
wild [illegible]

'Sir [illegible]
wild [illegible]
and me [illegible]
an if [illegible]
[illegible]

'[illegible]
lack [illegible]
[illegible]
these [illegible]
but [illegible] Wherefore I
[illegible] the night, and [illegible]
[illegible] the vermin will be tired
out with [illegible] and mayhap
will [illegible] ank bellies with flesh of
my good neighbours here, the unteachable
[illegible]

[illegible] not, and asked could he [illegible]
[illegible] them to a good inn?

'Humph! There is the Tête [illegible]
granddaughter keeps it. She [illegible]
not so knavish as most [illegible]
house indifferent clean.'

'Hey, for the Tête [illegible]
decided by his [illegible]

On the way [illegible]
panion what a [illegible]

Denys laughed at his ignorance. 'Not know what a mijaurée is? Why, all the world knows that. It is neither more nor less than a mijaurée.'

As they entered the Tête d'Or they met a young lady richly dressed, with the velvet chaperon on her head which was confined by law to the nobility. They unbonneted and louted low, and she curtsied, but fixed her eye on vacancy the while, which had a curious rather than a genial effect. However, nobility was not so unassuming in those days as it is now, so they were little surprised. But the next minute supper was served, and lo! in came this princess and carved the goose.

'Holy Saint Bavon,' cried Gerard. 'T was the landlady all the while.'

A young woman, cursed with nice white teeth and lovely hands; for these beauties being misallied to homely features had turned her head. She was a feeble carver, carving not for the sake of others but herself, — that is, to display her hands. When not carving she was eternally either taking a pin out of her head or her body, or else putting a pin into her head or her body. To display her teeth, she laughed indifferently at gay or grave, — and from ear to ear; and she 'sat at ease' with her mouth ajar.

[illegible]

Now [illegible] for affection [illegible] see [illegible] casting [illegible] one [illegible]

Presently, [illegible] she gave a [illegible] chair like [illegible] out of the [illegible] holding her [illegible] with both [illegible] door, a [illegible] a state of [illegible] terror. The [illegible] at the [illegible] awhile, then [illegible] Denys, to whom a [illegible] a sexual [illegible] thing, said he would [illegible] her back.

"Nay, nay, nay, for [illegible] cried Gerard, earnestly. [illegible] sure some saint sent thee to [illegible]

Now, at his right hand sat a [illegible] middle-aged burgher, whose [illegible] had been cynical. He had never budged, nor even

rested his knife, at all this fracas. He now turned on Gerard and inquired haughtily whether he really thought that *grimacière* was afraid of a mouse.

'Ay. She screamed hearty.'

'Where is the coquette that cannot scream to the life? These she tavern-keepers do still ape the nobles. Some princess or duchess hath lain here a night, that was honestly afeard of a mouse, having been brought up to it. And this ape hath seen her, and said, "I will start at a mouse, and make a coil." She has no more right to start at a mouse than to wear that fur on her bosom, and that velvet on her monkey's head. I am of the town, young man, and have known the mijaurée all her life, and I mind when she was no more afeard of a mouse than she is of a man.' He added that she was fast emptying the inn with these *singeries*. 'All the world is so sick of her hands that her very kinsfolk will not venture themselves anigh them.' He concluded with something like a sigh, 'The Tête d'Or was a thriving hostelry under my old chum her good father; but she is digging its grave tooth and nail.'

'Tooth and nail? Good! A right merry conceit, and a true,' said Gerard.

But the right merry conceit was an inadver-

tence as pure as snow, and the stout burgher went to his grave and never knew what he had done; for just then attention was attracted by Denys returning pompously. He inspected the apartment minutely, and with a high official air; he also looked solemnly under the table. And during the whole inquisition a white hand was placed conspicuously on the edge of the open door, and a tremulous voice inquired behind it whether the horrid thing was quite gone.

'The enemy has retreated, bag and baggage,' said Denys, and handed in the trembling fair, who, sitting down, apologized to her guests for her foolish fears with so much earnestness, grace, and seeming self-contempt that but for a sour grin on his neighbour's face, Gerard would have been taken in as all the other strangers were.

Dinner ended, the young landlady begged an Augustine friar at her right hand to say grace. He delivered a longish one. The moment he began she clapped her white hands piously together, and held them up joined for mortals to admire ('t is an excellent pose for taper white fingers), and cast her eyes upward toward heaven, and felt as thankful to it as a magpie does while cutting off with your thimble.

After supper the two friends went to the

rested his knife, at all this fracas. He now turned on Gerard and inquired haughtily whether he really thought that *grimacière* was afraid of a mouse.

'Ay. She screamed hearty.'

'Where is the coquette that cannot scream to the life? These she tavern-keepers do still ape the nobles. Some princess or duchess hath lain here a night, that was honestly afeard of a mouse, having been brought up to it. And this ape hath seen her, and said, "I will start at a mouse, and make a coil." She has no more right to start at a mouse than to wear that fur on her bosom, and that velvet on her monkey's head. I am of the town, young man, and have known the mijaurée all her life, and I mind when she was no more afeard of a mouse than she is of a man.' He added that she was fast emptying the inn with these *singeries*. 'All the world is so sick of her hands that her very kinsfolk will not venture themselves anigh them.' He concluded with something like a sigh, 'The Tête d'Or was a thriving hostelry under my old chum her good father; but she is digging its grave tooth and nail.'

'Tooth and nail? Good! A right merry conceit, and a true,' said Gerard.

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tence as pure as snow, and the stout burgher went to his grave and never knew what he had done; for just then attention was attracted by Denys returning pompously. He inspected the apartment minutely, and with a high official air; he also looked solemnly under the table. And during the whole inquisition a white hand was placed conspicuously on the edge of the open door, and a tremulous voice inquired behind it whether the horrid thing was quite gone.

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After supper the two friends went to the

street door and eyed the market-place. The mistress joined them, and pointed out the town-hall, the borough jail, St. Catherine's church, etc. This was courteous, to say the least. But the true cause soon revealed itself: the fair hand was poked right under their eyes every time an object was indicated; and Gerard eyed it like a basilisk, and longed for a bunch of nettles.

The sun set, and the travellers, few in number, drew round the great roaring fire, and omitting to go on the spit, were frozen behind though roasted in front; for if the German stoves were oppressively hot, the French *salles à manger* were bitterly cold, and above all stormy. In Germany men sat bareheaded round the stove, and took off their upper clothes; but in Burgundy they kept on their hats, and put on their warmest furs to sit round the great open chimney-places, at which the external air rushed furiously from door and ill-fitting window. However, it seems their mediæval backs were broad enough to bear it; for they made themselves not only comfortable but merry, and broke harmless jests over each other in turn. For instance, Denys's new shoes, though not in direct communication, had this day exploded with twin-like sympathy and unanimity.

'Where do you buy your shoon, soldier?' asked one.

Denys looked askant at Gerard, and not liking the theme, shook it off. 'I gather 'em off the trees by the roadside,' said he, surlily.

'Then you gathered these too ripe,' said the hostess, who was only a fool externally.

'Ay, rotten ripe,' observed another, inspecting them.

Gerard said nothing, but pointed the circular satire by pantomime. He slyly put out both his feet, one after the other, under Denys's eye, with their German shoes, on which a hundred leagues of travel had produced no effect. They seemed hewn out of a rock.

At this, 'I'll twist the smooth varlet's neck that sold me mine,' shouted Denys, in huge wrath, and confirmed the threat with singular oaths peculiar to the mediæval military.

The landlady put her fingers in her ears, thereby exhibiting the hand in a fresh attitude. 'Tell me when he has done his orisons, somebody,' said she, mincingly. And after that they fell to telling stories.

Gerard, when his turn came, told the adventure of Denys and Gerard at the inn in Domfront, and so well that the hearers were rapt

into sweet oblivion of the very existence of mijaurée and hands. But this made her very uneasy, and she had recourse to her grand *coup*. This misdirected genius had for a twelvemonth past practised yawning, and could do it now at any moment so naturally as to set all creation gaping, could all creation have seen her. By this means she got in all her charms; for first she showed her teeth, then, out of good breeding, you know, closed her mouth with three taper fingers. So the moment Gerard's story got too interesting and absorbing, she turned to and made yawns, and *croix sur la bouche*.

This was all very fine; but Gerard was an artist, and artists are chilled by gaping auditors. He bore up against the yawns a long time; but finding they came from a bottomless reservoir, lost both heart and temper, and suddenly rising in mid narrative, said, 'But I weary our hostess, and I am tired myself; so good-night!' whipped a candle off the dresser, whispered Denys, 'I cannot stand her,' and marched to bed in a moment.

The mijaurée coloured and bit her lips. She had not intended her by-play for Gerard's eye; and she saw in a moment she had been rude, and silly, and publicly rebuked. She sat with cheek on fire, and a little natural water in her

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eyes, and looked ten times comelier and more womanly and interesting than she had done all day. The desertion of the best narrator broke up the party, and the unassuming Denys approached the meditative mijaurée, and invited her in the most flattering terms to gamble with him. She started from her revery, looked him down into the earth's centre with chilling dignity, and consented; for she remembered all in a moment what a show of hands gambling admitted.

The soldier and the mijaurée rattled the dice. In which sport she was so taken up with her hands that she forgot to cheat, and Denys won an *écu au soleil* of her. She fumbled slowly with her purse, partly because her sex do not burn to pay debts of honour, partly to admire the play of her little knuckles peeping between their soft white cushions.

Denys proposed a compromise. 'Three silver francs I win of you, fair hostess. Give me now three kisses of this white hand and we 'll e'en cry quits.'

'You are malapert,' said the lady, with a toss of her head; 'besides, they are so dirty. See! they are like ink;' and to convince him, she put them out to him and turned them up and down. They were no dirtier than cream fresh

from the cow, and she knew it. She was eternally washing and scenting them.

Denys read the objection like the observant warrior he was, seized them and mumbled them.

Finding him so appreciative of her charm, she said timidly, 'Will you do me a kindness, good soldier?'

'A thousand, fair hostess, an you will.'

'Nay, I ask but one. 'T is to tell thy comrade I was right sorry to lose his most thrilling story, and I hope he will tell me the rest tomorrow morning. Meantime I shall not sleep for thinking on 't. Wilt tell him that — to pleasure me?'

'Ay, I 'll tell the young savage. But he is not worthy of your condescension, sweet hostess. He would rather be aside a man than a woman any day.'

'So would — ahem. He is right; the young women of the day are not worthy of him, *un tas des mijaurées*. He has a good, honest, and right comely face. Anyway, I would not guest of mine should think me unmannerly, — not for all the world. Wilt keep faith with me and tell him?'

'On this fair hand I swear it; and thus I seal the pledge.'

'There; no need to melt the wax, though. Now go to bed. And tell him ere you sleep.'

The perverse toad (I thank thee, Marion, for teaching me that word) was inclined to bestow her slight affections upon Gerard. Not that she was inflammable, — far less so than many that passed for prudes in the town; but Gerard possessed a triple attraction that has ensnared coquettes in all ages. (1.) He was very handsome. (2.) He did not admire her the least. (3.) He had given her a good slap in the face.

Denys woke Gerard and gave the message. Gerard was not enchanted. 'Dost wake a tired man to tell him that? Am I to be pestered with *mijaurées* by night as well as day?'

'But I tell thee, novice, thou hast conquered her; trust to my experience. Her voice sank to melodious whispers; and the cunning jade did in a manner bribe me to carry thee her challenge to Love's lists, — for so I read her message.'

Denys then, assuming the senior and the man of the world, told Gerard the time was come to show him how a soldier understood friendship and *camaraderie*. Italy was now out of the question. Fate had provided better; and the

blind jade Fortune had smiled on merit for once. The Head of Gold had been a prosperous inn, would be again with a man at *its* head. A good general laid far-sighted plans, but was always ready to abandon them should some brilliant advantage offer, and to reap the full harvest of the unforeseen ; 't was chiefly by this trait great leaders defeated little ones, for these latter could do nothing not cut and dried beforehand.

'Sorry friendship, that would marry me to a mijaurée,' interposed Gerard, yawning.

'Comrade, be reasonable ; 't is not the friskiest sheep that falls down the cliff. All creatures must have their fling soon or late ; and why not a woman ? What more frivolous than a kitten ? what graver than a cat ?'

'Hast a good eye for nature, Denys,' said Gerard ; 'that I proclaim.'

'A better for thine interest, boy. Trust, then, to me. These little doves, they are my study day and night. Happy the man whose wife taketh her fling before wedlock, and who trippeth up the altar-steps instead of down 'em. Marriage, it always changeth them for better or else for worse. Why, Gerard, she is honest when all is done ; and he is no man, nor half a man, that cannot mould any honest lass like a

bit of warm wax, and she aye aside him at bed and board. I tell thee, in one month thou wilt make of this coquette the matron the most sober in the town, and of all its wives the one most docile and submissive. Why, she is half tamed already. Nine in ten meek and mild ones had gently hated thee like poison all their lives for wounding of their hidden pride; but she for an affront proffers affection. By Joshua his bugle! a generous lass, and void of petty malice. When thou wast gone she sat a-thinking and spoke not, — a sure sign of love in one of her sex; for of all things else they speak ere they think. Also her voice did sink exceeding low in discoursing of thee, and murmured sweetly, — another infallible sign. The bolt hath struck and rankles in her. Oh, be joyful! Art silent? I see; 't is settled. I shall go alone to Remiremont, — alone and sad. But, pillage and pole-axes! what care I for that, since my dear comrade will stay here, landlord of the Tête d'Or, and safe from all the storms of life? Wilt think of me, Gerard, now and then by thy warm fire, — of me camped on some windy heath, or lying in wet trenches, or wounded on the field and far from comfort? Nay,' — and this he said in a manner truly noble, — 'not comfortless; for cold or wet or bleeding, 't will still

warm my heart to lie on my back and think that I have placed my dear friend and comrade true in the Tête d'Or, far from a soldier's ills.'

'I let you run on, dear Denys,' said Gerard, softly, 'because at each word you show me the treasure of a good heart. But now bethink thee; my troth is plighted there where my heart it clingeth. You so leal, would you make me disloyal?'

'Perdition seize me! but I forgot that,' said Denys.

'No more, then; but hie thee to bed, good Denys. Next to Margaret I love thee best on earth, and value thy *cœur d'or* far more than a dozen of these Têtes d'Or. So prithee call me at the first blush of rosy-fingered morn, and let 's away ere the woman with the hands be stirring.'

They rose with the dawn, and broke their fast by the kitchen fire.

Denys inquired of the girl whether the mistress was about.

'Nay, but she hath risen from her bed; by the same token I am carrying her this to clean her withal.' And she filled a mug with boiling water, and took it upstairs.

'Behold,' said Gerard, 'the very elements

must be warmed to suit her skin. What had the saints said, which still chose the coldest pool? Away, ere she come down and catch us.'

They paid the score, and left the Tête d'Or, while its mistress was washing her hands.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTSIDE the town they found the snow fresh trampled by innumerable wolves every foot of the road.

'We did well to take the old man's advice, Denys.'

'Ay, did we; for now I think on't I did hear them last night a-scurrying under our window and howling and whining for man's flesh in yon market-place. But no fat burgher did pity the poor vagabonds, and drop out o' window.'

Gerard smiled, but with an air of abstraction.

And they plodded on in silence.

'What dost meditate so profoundly?'

'Thy goodness.'

Denys was anything but pleased at this answer. Among his oddities you may have observed that he could stand a great deal of real impertinence, he was so good-humoured; but would fire up now and then where not even the shadow of a ground for anger existed.

'A civil question merits a civil reply,' said he, very dryly.

'Alas! I meant no other,' said Gerard.

'Then why pretend you were thinking of my goodness, when you know I have no goodness under my skin.'

'Had another said this, I had answered, "Thou liest;" but to thee I say, "Hast no eye for men's qualities, but only for women's." And once more I do defy thy unreasonable choler, and say I was thinking on thy goodness of overnight. Wouldst have wedded me to the Tête d'Or, or rather to the *tête de veau dorée*, and left thyself solitary.'

'Oh, are ye there, lad?' said Denys recovering his good-humour in a moment. 'Well, but to speak sooth, I meant that not for goodness, but for friendship and true fellowship, — no more. And let me tell you, my young master, my conscience it pricketh me even now for letting you turn your back thus on fortune and peaceful days. A truer friend than I had ta'en and somewhat hamstrung thee. Then hadst thou been fain to lie smarting at the Tête d'Or a month or so. Yon skittish lass had nursed thee tenderly, and all had been well. Blade I had in hand to do 't; but remembering how thou hatest pain though it be but a scratch, my craven

heart it failed me at the pinch.' And Denys wore a look of humble apology for his lack of virtuous resolution when the path of duty lay so clear.

Gerard raised his eyebrows with astonishment at this monstrous but thoroughly characteristic revelation. However, this new and delicate point of friendship was never discussed, — namely, whether one ought in all love to cut the tendon Achilles of one's friend, — for an incident interposed.

'Here cometh one in our rear a-riding on his neighbour's mule,' shouted Denys.

Gerard turned round. 'And how know ye 't is not his own, pray?'

'Oh, blind! Because he rides it with no discretion.'

And in truth the man came galloping like a fury. But what astonished the friends most was that on reaching them the rustic rider's eyes opened saucer-like, and he drew the rein so suddenly and powerfully that the mule stuck out her fore-legs, and went sliding between the pedestrians like a four-legged table on casters.

'I trow ye are from the Tête d'Or.' They assented. 'Which of ye is the younger?'

'He that was born the later,' said Denys, winking at his companion.

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[illegible]

[illegible]

daughter of Herodias' there was no affectation here, but only woman's good wit. Doubtless the wraps contained something which out of delicacy, or her sex's lovely cunning, she would not her hind should see her bestow on a young man. 'Thy garter, to wit.'

'I wear none.'

'Her own then, or a lock of her hair. What is this? A piece of raw silk fresh from the worm. Well, of all the love tokens!'

'Now, who but thee ever dreamed that she is so naught as send me love tokens? I saw no harm in her, — barring her hands.'

'Stay, here is something hard lurking in this soft nest. Come forth I say, little nestling! Saints and pikestaves! Look at this!'

It was a gold ring, with a great amethyst glowing and sparkling, full coloured, but pure as crystal.

'How lovely!' said Gerard, innocently.

'And here is something writ. Read it thou? I read not so glib as some, when I know not the matter beforehand.'

Gerard took the paper. ''Tis a posy, and fairly enough writ.' He read the lines, blushing like a girl. They were very naïve, and may be thus Englished: —

> 'Youth, with thee my heart is fledde.
> Come back to the Golden Hedde!

With [illegible] for [illegible]
Of [illegible]
[illegible]
Came back [illegible]'

'The little [illegible] [illegible] Denys.

'The great [illegible] some times. However, [illegible] played this prank with [illegible] ne'er expose her folly. But [illegible] ness? Could she not [illegible] on thee.'—Denys [illegible] thee that art [illegible]

Denys confessed that his [illegible] harped his very thought. [illegible] to him that a [illegible] with [illegible] pass by a man and [illegible] boy. Still he could not [illegible] bounty of Nature. Boys [illegible] after all, and but for [illegible] women, their [illegible] would be [illegible] and never [illegible] fair could make a man [illegible] [illegible] as a boy.

Gerard interrupted [illegible] beg the [illegible] lady's ring. [illegible] sisted on Gerard [illegible]

at once, ring and all, like a man, and not letting a poor girl hold out her arms to him in vain.

'Her hands you mean.'

'Her hand, with the Tête d'Or in it.'

Failing in this he was for putting the ring on his friend's finger. Gerard declined. 'I wear a ring already.'

'What! that sorry gimcrack? Why, 't is pewter, or tin at best; and this virgin gold, forbye the jewel.'

'Ay, but 't was Margaret gave me this one; and I value it above rubies. I 'll neither part with it nor give it a rival;' and he kissed the base metal, and bade it fear nought.

'I see the owl hath sent her ring to a goose,' said Denys, sorrowfully. However, he prevailed on Gerard to fasten it inside his bonnet. To this, indeed, the lad consented very readily. For sovereign qualities were universally ascribed to certain jewels, and the amethyst ranked high among these precious talismans.

When this was disposed of, Gerard earnestly requested his friend to let the matter drop, since speaking of the other sex to him made him pine so for Margaret, and almost unmanned him with the thought that each step was taking him farther from her. 'I am no general lover, Denys.

[illegible]

cients true, that better is a bright comrade on the weary road than a horse litter; and, dear brother, when I do think of what we have done and suffered together! Savedst my life from the bear, and from yet more savage thieves; and even poor I did make shift to draw thee out of Rhine, and somehow loved thee double from that hour. How many ties tender and strong between us! Had I my will, I 'd never, never, never, never, part with my Denys on this side the grave. Well-a-day! God his will be done.'

'No; my will shall be done this time,' shouted Denys. 'Le bon Dieu has bigger fish to fry than you or me. I 'll go with thee to Rome. There is my hand on it.'

'Think what you say! 'T is impossible. 'T is too selfish of me.'

'I tell thee, 't is settled. No power can change me. At Remiremont I borrow ten pieces of my uncle, and on we go. 'T is fixed; irrevocable as fate.'

They shook hands over it. Then Gerard said nothing, for his heart was too full; but he ran twice round his companion as he walked, then danced backward in front of him, and finally took his hand, and so on they went hand-in-hand like sweethearts, till a company of

mounted soldiers, about fifty in number, rose to sight on the brow of a hill.

'See the banner of Burgundy,' said Denys, joyfully. 'I shall look out for a comrade among these.'

'How gorgeous is the standard in the sun,' said Gerard; 'and how brave are the leaders with velvet and feathers, and steel breastplates like glassy mirrors!'

When they came near enough to distinguish faces, Denys uttered an exclamation: 'Why, 't is the Bastard of Burgundy, as I live. Nay, then; there is fighting a-foot since he is out. A gallant leader, Gerard. Rates his life no higher than a private soldier's, and a soldier's no higher than a tomtit's; and that is the captain for me.'

'And see, Denys, the very mules with their great brass frontlets and trappings seem proud to carry them; no wonder men itch to be soldiers.' And in the midst of this innocent admiration the troop came up with them.

'Halt!' cried a stentorian voice. The troop halted. The Bastard of Burgundy bent his brow gloomily on Denys: 'How now, arbalister, how comes it thy face is turned southward, when every good hand and heart is hurrying northward?'

Denys replied respectfully that he was going on leave, after some years of service, to see his kindred at Remiremont.

'Good. But this is not the time for 't; the duchy is disturbed. Ho! bring that dead soldier's mule to the front; and thou mount her, and forward with us to Flanders.'

'So please your highness,' said Denys, firmly, 'that may not be. My home is close at hand; I have not seen it these three years. And, above all, I have this poor youth in charge, whom I may not, cannot leave, till I see him shipped for Rome.'

'Dost bandy words with me?' said the chief, with amazement turning fast to wrath. 'Art weary o' thy life? Let go the youth's hand, and into the saddle without more idle words.'

Denys made no reply; but he held Gerard's hand the tighter, and looked defiance.

At this the Bastard roared, 'Jarnac, dismount six of thy archers, and shoot me this white-livered cur dead where he stands, for an example.'

The young Count de Jarnac, second in command, gave the order, and the men dismounted to execute it.

'Strip him naked,' said the Bastard, in the cold tone of military business, 'and put his

Flanders.

UNIV. OF VIRGINIA

D

arms and accoutrements on the spare mule. We 'll maybe find some clown worthier to wear them.'

Denys groaned aloud, 'Am I to be shamed as well as slain?'

'Oh, nay, nay, nay!' cried Gerard, awaking from the stupor into which this transaction of tyranny had thrown him. 'He shall go with you on the instant. I 'd liever part with him forever than see a hair of his dear head harmed. Oh, sir! oh, my lord, give a poor boy but a minute to bid his only friend farewell! He will go with you. I swear he shall go with you.'

The stern leader nodded a cold, contemptuous assent. 'Thou, Jarnac, stay with them, and bring him on alive or dead.—Forward!' And he resumed his march, followed by all the band but the young count and six archers, one of whom held the spare mule.

Denys and Gerard gazed at each other haggardly. Oh, what a look! And after that mute interchange of anguish, they spoke hurriedly, for the moments were flying by.

'Thou goest to Holland. Thou knowest where she bides. Tell her all. She will be kind to thee for my sake.'

'Oh, sorry tale that I shall carry her! For

God's sake go back to the Tête d'Or. I am mad.'

'Hush! Let me think. Have I nought to say to thee, Denys? My head! my head!'

'Ah, I have it! Make for the Rhine, Gerard! Strasbourg, — 't is but a step, — and down the current to Rotterdam. Margaret is there: I go thither. I 'll tell her thou art coming. We shall all be together.'

'My lads, haste ye, or you will get us into trouble,' said the count, firmly, but not harshly now.

'Oh, sir, one moment! one little moment!' panted Gerard.

'Cursed be the land I was born in! Cursed be the race of man, and he that made them what they are!' screamed Denys.

'Hush! Denys, hush! Blaspheme not! O God, forgive him, he wots not what he says. Be patient, Denys, — be patient! Though we meet no more on earth, let us meet in a better world, where no blasphemer may enter. To my heart, lost friend; for what are words now?' He held out his arms, and they locked each other in a close embrace. They kissed each other again and again, speechless, and the tears rained down their cheeks. And the Count de Jarnac looked on amazed; but the rougher sol-

diers, to whom comrade was a sacred name, looked on with some pity in their hard faces. Then at a signal from Jarnac, with kind force and words of rude consolation, they almost lifted Denys on to the mule; and putting him in the middle of them, spurred after their leader. And Gerard ran wildly after (for the lane turned) to see the very last of him; and the last glimpse he caught, Denys was rocking to and fro on his mule, and tearing his hair out. But at this sight something rose in Gerard's throat so high, so high, he could run no more nor breathe, but gasped, and leaned against the snow-clad hedge, seizing it, and choking piteously.

The thorns ran into his hand.

After a bitter struggle he got his breath again, and now began to see his own misfortune; yet not all at once to realize it, so sudden and numbing was the stroke. He staggered on, but scarce feeling or caring whither he was going; and every now and then he stopped, and his arms fell and his head sank on his chest, and he stood motionless. Then he said to himself, 'Can this thing be? This must be a dream. 'T is scarce five minutes since we were so happy, walking handed, faring to Rome together; and we admired them and their gay banners and helmets, — oh, hearts of hell!'

All Nature seemed to stare now as lonely as himself. Not a creature in sight. No colour but white. He, the ghost of his former self, wandered alone among the ghosts of trees and fields and hedges. Desolate! desolate! desolate! All was desolate.

He knelt and gathered a little snow. 'Nay, I dream not, for this *is* snow, — cold as the world's heart. It is bloody, too. What may that mean? Fool! 't is from thy hand. I mind not the wound. Ay, I see: thorns. Welcome! kindly foes. I felt ye not; ye ran not into my heart. Ye are not cruel like men.'

He had risen, and was dragging his leaden limbs along, when he heard horses' feet and gay voices behind him. He turned with a joyful but wild hope that the soldiers had relented and were bringing Denys back. But no: it was a gay cavalcade. A gentleman of rank and his favourites in velvet and furs and feathers, and four or five armed retainers in buff jerkins.

They swept gayly by.

Gerard never looked at them after they were gone by. Certain gay shadows had come and passed; that was all. He was like one in a dream. But he was rudely wakened. Suddenly a voice in front of him cried harshly, 'Stand and deliver!' and there were three of

the gentleman's servants in front of him. They had ridden back to rob him.

'How, ye false knaves,' said he, quite calmly, 'would ye shame your noble master? He will hang ye to the nearest tree;' and with these words he drew his sword doggedly, and set his back to the hedge.

One of the men instantly levelled his petronel at him.

But another, less sanguinary, interposed. 'Be not so hasty, and be not thou so mad! Look yonder!'

Gerard looked, and scarce a hundred yards off the nobleman and his friends had halted, and sat on their horses, looking at the lawless act, too proud to do their own dirty work, but not too proud to reap the fruit, and watch lest their agents should rob them of another man's money.

The milder servant then, a good-natured fellow, showed Gerard resistance was vain; reminded him common thieves often took the life as well as the purse, and assured him it cost a mint to be a gentleman. His master had lost money at play overnight, and was going to visit his leman, and so must take money where he saw it.

'Therefore, good youth, consider that we rob

not for ourselves, and deliver us that fat purse at thy girdle without more ado, nor put us to the pain of slitting thy throat and taking it all the same.'

'This knave is right,' said Gerard, calmly, aloud but to himself. 'I ought not to fling away my life; Margaret would be so sorry. Take, then, the poor man's purse to the rich man's pouch, and with it this: tell him I pray the Holy Trinity each coin in it may burn his hand, and freeze his heart, and blast his soul forever. Begone, and leave me to my sorrow!' He flung them the purse.

They rode away muttering, for his words pricked them a little, — a very little; and he staggered on, penniless now as well as friendless, till he came to the edge of a wood. Then, though his heart could hardly feel this second blow, his judgment did; and he began to ask himself what was the use of going farther? He sat down on the hard road, and ran his nails into his hair, and tried to think for the best, — a task all the more difficult that a strange drowsiness was stealing over him. Rome he could never reach without money. Denys had said, 'Go to Strasbourg, and down the Rhine home.' He would obey Denys. But how get to Strasbourg without money?

Then suddenly seemed to ring in his ears:

> 'Gyf the world prove [illegible] and [illegible].
> Come back to the Hende [illegible] [illegible].

'And if I do, I must go as her servant, — who am Margaret's. [illegible] I will sleep, and [illegible] how happy were we in your [illegible] — we [illegible] knew how happy. There is a house [illegible] well-to-do. What if I told [illegible] prayed his aid to retrieve my curse [illegible] Rhine? Fool! is he not a man [illegible] He would scorn me, and [illegible] Denys cursed the race of men. [illegible] never; but, oh, I [illegible] to loathe [illegible] Nay, here will I lie till sunset [illegible] creep into this rich man's [illegible] stealth a draught of milk [illegible] to keep body and soul together. [illegible] hath seen the rich [illegible] me, will [illegible] forgive me. They say [illegible] snow. Death steals on such [illegible] muffled feet and honey breath. But what [illegible] I am a-weary, a-weary. Shall this be the [illegible] where lie the wolves you old man [illegible] must e'en trust them, — they are not [illegible] I am so a-weary.'

He crawled to the roadside, and stretched out his limbs on the snow, with a deep sigh.

'Ah, tear not thine hair so! Teareth my heart to see thee.'

'Mar-garet. Never see me more. Poor Mar-ga-ret.'

And the too tender heart was still.

And the constant lover, and friend of antique mould, lay silent on the snow, — in peril from the weather, in peril from wild beasts, in peril from hunger, friendless and penniless in a strange land, and not half way to Rome.

CHAPTER XX.

RUDE travel is enticing to us English, and so are its records, — even though the adventurer be no pilgrim of love, and intimate friendship has at least the interest of a [illegible]. Still, as the true centre of this story is in [illegible] land, it is full time to return thither, and to those ordinary personages and incidents whereof life has been mainly composed in all ages.

Jorian Ketel came to Peter's house to claim Margaret's promise. But Margaret was ill in bed; and Peter, on hearing his errand, affronted him and warned him off the premises, and one or two that stood by were for ducking him, — for both father and daughter were favourites, and the whole story was in every mouth, and the Sevenbergans in that state of not indiscriminating irritation which accompanies [illegible] sympathy.

So Jorian Ketel went off in [illegible] and repented him of his good deed. This [illegible] of penitence is not rare, and has the merit of being

sincere. Dierich Brower, who was discovered at the Three Kings, making a chattèrbox drunk in order to worm out of him the whereabouts of Martin Wittenhaagen, was actually taken and flung into a horse-pond, and threatened with worse usage, should he ever show his face in the burgh again ; and finally, municipal jealousy being roused, the burgomaster of Sevenbergen sent a formal missive to the burgomaster of Tergou, reminding him he had overstepped the law, and requesting him to apply to the authorities of Sevenbergen on any future occasion when he might have a complaint, real or imaginary, against any of its townsfolk.

The wily Ghysbrecht, suppressing his rage at this remonstrance, sent back a civil message to say that the person he had followed to Sevenbergen was a Tergovan, one Gerard, and that he had stolen the town records; that Gerard having escaped into foreign parts, and probably taken the documents with him, the whole matter was at an end.

Thus he made a virtue of necessity; but in reality his calmness was but a veil. Baffled at Sevenbergen, he turned his views elsewhere. He set his emissaries to learn from the family at Tergou whither Gerard had fled, and 'to his infinite surprise' they did not know. This added

[illegible]

partake in the general gloom and sorrow, succeeded so far as to impose upon their father and Giles; but the demure satisfaction that lay at their bottom could not escape these feminine eyes, —

> 'That, noting all, seem'd nought to note.'

Thus mistrust and suspicion sat at the table, — poor substitutes for Gerard's intelligent face, that had brightened the whole circle, unobserved till it was gone. As for the old hosier, his pride had been wounded by his son's disobedience, and so he bore stiffly up, and did his best never to mention Gerard's name; but underneath his Spartan cloak Nature might be seen tugging at his heartstrings. One anxiety he never affected to conceal. 'If I but knew where the boy is, and that his life and health are in no danger, small would be my care,' would he say; and then a deep sigh would follow. I cannot help thinking that if Gerard had opened the door just then, and walked in, there would have been many tears and embraces for him, and few reproaches, or none.

One thing took the old couple quite by surprise, — publicity. Ere Gerard had been gone a week, his adventures were in every mouth; and, to make matters worse, the popular sym-

pathy declared itself warmly on the side of the lovers, and against Gerard's cruel parents and that old busy-body the burgomaster, "who must put his nose into a business that nowise concerned him."

"Mother," said Kate, "it is all over the town that Margaret is down with a fever, — a burning fever; her father fears her sadly."

"Margaret? What Margaret?" inquired Catherine, with a treacherous assumption of calmness and indifference.

"Oh, mother! Whom should I mean? Why, Gerard's Margaret."

"Gerard's Margaret!" screamed Catherine; "how dare you say such a word to me? And I rede you never mention that hussy's name in this house, that she has laid bare. She is the ruin of my poor boy, — the flower of all my flock. She is the cause that he is not a holy priest in the midst of us, but is roaming the world, and I a desolate, broken-hearted mother. There, do not cry, my girl; I do ill to speak harsh to you. But, oh, Kate! you know not what passes in a mother's heart. I bear up before you all; it behooves me swallow my fears. But at night I see him in my dreams, and still some trouble or other near him; sometimes he is torn by wild beasts; other times he is in the

hands of robbers, and their cruel knives uplifted to strike his poor pale face, that one should think would move a stone. Oh! when I remember that while I sit here in comfort perhaps my poor boy lies dead in some savage place, and all along of that girl! There! her very name is ratsbane to me. I tremble all over when I hear it.'

'I 'll not say anything, nor do anything to grieve you worse, mother,' said Kate, tenderly; but she sighed.

She whose name was so fiercely interdicted in this house, was much spoken of, and even pitied, elsewhere. All Sevenbergen was sorry for her, and the young men and maidens cast many a pitying glance, as they passed, at the little window where the beauty of the village lay 'dying for love.' In this familiar phrase they underrated her spirit and unselfishness. Gerard was not dead, and she was too loyal herself to doubt his constancy. Her father was dear to her and helpless; and but for bodily weakness, all her love for Gerard would not have kept her from doing her duties, though she might have gone about them with drooping head and heavy heart. But physical and mental excitement had brought on an attack of fever, so violent that nothing but youth and constitu-

tion saved her. The malady left her at last, but in that terrible state of bodily weakness in which the patient feels life a burden.

Then it is that love and friendship by the bedside are mortal angels, with comfort in their voices and healing in their palms. But this poor girl had to come back to life and vigour how she could. Many days she lay alone, and the heavy hours rolled like leaden waves over her. In her enfeebled state existence seemed a burden, and life a thing gone by. She could not try her best to get well. Gerard was gone. She had not him to get well for. Often she lay for hours quite still, with the tears welling gently out of her eyes.

One day, waking from an uneasy slumber, she found two women in her room. One was a servant; the other by the deep fur on her collar and sleeves was a person of consideration. A narrow band of silvery hair, being spared by her coiffure, showed her to be past the age when women of sense conceal their years. The looks of both were kind and friendly. Margaret tried to raise herself in the bed, but the old lady placed a hand very gently on her.

'Lie still, sweetheart; we come not here to put you about, but to comfort you, God will-

ing. Now, cheer up a bit; and tell us, first, who think you we are.'

'Nay, madam, I know you, though I never saw you before. You are the Demoiselle Van Eyck, and this is Reicht Heynes. Gerard has oft spoken of you, and of your goodness to him. Madam, he has no friend like you near him now;' and at this thought she lay back, and the tears welled out of her eyes in a moment.

The good-natured Reicht Heynes began to cry for company; but her mistress scolded her. 'Well, you are a pretty one for a sick-room,' said she; and she put out a world of innocent art to cheer the patient, and not without some little success. An old woman that has seen life, and all its troubles, is a sovereign blessing by a sorrowful young woman's side. She knows what to say, and what to avoid. She knows how to soothe her and interest her. Ere she had been there an hour, she had Margaret's head lying on her shoulder instead of on the pillow, and Margaret's soft eyes dwelling on her with gentle gratitude.

'Ah! this is hair,' said the old lady, running her fingers through it. 'Come and look at it, Reicht!'

Reicht came and handled it, and praised it unaffectedly.

The poor girl that owned it was not quite out of the reach of flattery, owing doubtless to not being dead. 'In sooth, madam, I did use to think it hideous; but *he* praised it, and ever since then I have been almost vain of it,—saints forgive me. You know how foolish those are that love.'

'They are greater fools that don't,' said the old lady, sharply.

Margaret opened her lovely eyes, and looked at her for her meaning.

This was only the first of many visits. In fact, either Margaret Van Eyck or Reicht came nearly every day until their patient was convalescent; and she improved rapidly under their hands. Reicht attributed this principally to certain nourishing dishes she prepared in Peter's kitchen; but Margaret herself thought more of the kind words and eyes that kept telling her she had friends to live for.

Martin Wittenhaagen went straight to Rotterdam, to take the bull by the horns. The bull was a biped, with a crown for horns. It was Philip the Good, duke of this, earl of that, lord of the other. Arrived at Rotterdam, Martin found the Court was at Ghent. To Ghent he went, and sought an audience, but was put off

and baffled by lackeys and pages. So he threw himself in his sovereign's way out hunting, and, contrary to all court precedents commenced the conversation by roaring lustily for mercy.

'Why, where is the peril, man?' said the duke, looking all round and laughing.

'Grace for an old soldier hunted down by burghers!'

Now, kings differ in character like other folk; but there is one trait they have in common, — they are mightily inclined to be affable to men of very low estate. These do not vie with them in anything whatever, so jealousy cannot creep in; and they amuse them by their bluntness and novelty, and refresh the poor things with a touch of nature, — a rarity in courts. So Philip the Good reined in his horse and gave Martin almost a *tête-à-tête;* and Martin reminded him of a certain battle-field where he had received an arrow intended for his sovereign. The duke remembered the incident perfectly, and was graciously pleased to take a cheerful view of it. He could afford to, not having been the one hit. Then Martin told his majesty of Gerard's first capture in the church, his imprisonment in the tower, and the manœuvre by which they got him out, and all the details of the hunt; and whether he told it better

than I have, or the duke had not heard so many good stories as you have, certain it is that sovereign got so wrapt up in it that when a number of courtiers came galloping up and interrupted Martin, he swore like a costermonger, and threatened, only half in jest, to cut off the next head that should come between him and a good story. And when Martin had done, he cried out, —

'Saint Luke! what sport goeth on in this mine earldom, — ay! in my own woods, — and I see it not. You base fellows have all the luck.' And he was indignant at the partiality of Fortune. 'Lo you now! this was a man-hunt,' said he. '*I* never had the luck to be at a man-hunt.'

'My luck was none so great,' replied Martin, bluntly; 'I was on the wrong side of the dogs' noses.'

'Ah! so you were; I forgot that.' And royalty was more reconciled to its lot. 'What would you then?'

'A free pardon, your highness, for myself and Gerard.'

'For what?'

'For prison-breaking.'

'Go to! The bird will fly from the cage. 'T is instinct. Besides, coop a young man up

for loving a young woman? These burgomasters must be void of common sense. What else?'

'For striking down the burgomaster.'

'Oh, the hunted boar will turn to bay. 'T is his right; and I hold him less than man that grudges it him. What else?'

'For killing of the bloodhounds.'

The duke's countenance fell.

''T was their life or mine,' said Martin, eagerly.

'Ay! but I can't have my bloodhounds, my beautiful bloodhounds, sacrificed to — '

'No, no, no! They were not your dogs.'

'Whose dogs, then?'

'The ranger's.'

'Oh? Well, I am very sorry for him, but, as I was saying, I can't have my old soldiers sacrificed to his bloodhounds. Thou shalt have thy free pardon.'

'And poor Gerard?'

'And poor Gerard too, for thy sake. And more: tell thou this burgomaster his doings mislike me. This is to set up for a king, not a burgomaster. I 'll have no kings in Holland but one. Bid him be more humble, or, by Saint Jude, I 'll hang him before his own door, as I hanged the burgomaster of what 's the

name, — some town or other in Flanders, I was; no 't was somewhere in Brabant. [illegible] matter, I hanged him — I remember [illegible] — for oppressing poor folk.'

The duke then beckoned to [illegible] a pursy old fellow that rode like a [illegible], and made him write out a free pardon for Martin and for Gerard. This precious document was drawn up in form, and signed next day and Martin hastened home with it.

Margaret had left her bed some day, and was sitting pale and pensive by the [illegible] when he burst in, waving the parchment and crying 'A free pardon, girl, for Gerard as well as me! Send for him back when you will, all the burgomasters on earth dare not lay a finger on him.'

She flushed all over with joy, and her hands trembled with eagerness as she took the parchment and devoured it with her eyes, and kissed it again and again, and flung her arms round Martin's neck and kissed *him*. When she was calmer, she told him Heaven had raised her up a friend in the Dame Van Eyck. 'And I would fain consult her on this good news, but I have not strength to walk so far.'

'What need to walk? There is my mule.'

'Your mule, Martin?'

The old soldier or professional pillager laughed, and confessed he had got so used to her that he forgot at times Ghysbrecht had a prior claim. To-morrow he would turn her into the burgomaster's yard, but to-night she should carry Margaret to Tergou.

It was nearly dusk, so Margaret ventured; and about seven in the evening she astonished and gladdened her new but ardent friend by arriving at her house with unwonted roses on her cheeks, and Gerard's pardon in her bosom.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME are old in heart at forty, some are young at eighty. Margaret Van Eyck's heart was an evergreen. She loved her young namesake with youthful ardour. Nor was this new sentiment a mere caprice; she was quick at reading character, and saw in Margaret Brandt that which in one of her own sex goes far with an intelligent woman, — genuineness. But, besides her own sterling qualities, Margaret had from the first a potent ally in the old artist's bosom, — human nature.

Strange as it may appear to the unobservant, our hearts warm more readily to those we have benefited than to our benefactors. Some of the Greek philosophers noticed this; but the British Homer has stamped it in immortal lines: —

> 'I heard, and thought how side by side
> We two had stemmed the battle's tide
> In many a well-debated field,
> Where Bertram's breast was Philip's shield.

I thought on Darien's deserts pale,
Where Death bestrides the evening gale,
How o'er my friend my cloak I threw,
And fenceless faced the deadly dew.
I thought on Quariana's cliff,
Where, rescued from our foundering skiff,
Through the white breakers' wrath I bore
Exhausted Mortram to the shore;
And when his side an arrow found,
I sucked the Indian's venom'd wound.
These thoughts like torrents rushed along
To sweep away my purpose strong.'

Observe! this assassin's hand is stayed by memory, not of benefits received, but benefits conferred.

Now, Margaret Van Eyck had been wonderfully kind to Margaret Brandt; had broken through her own habits to go and see her; had nursed her, and soothed her, and petted her, and cured her more than all the medicine in the world. So her heart opened to the recipient of her goodness, and she loved her now far more tenderly than she had ever loved Gerard, — though, in truth, it was purely out of regard for Gerard she had visited her in the first instance.

When, therefore, she saw the roses on Margaret's cheek, and read the bit of parchment that had brought them there, she gave up her own views without a murmur.

'Sweetheart,' said she, 'I did desire he should stay in Italy five or six years, and come back rich, and, above all, an artist. But your happiness is before all; and I see you cannot live without him, so we must have him home as fast as may be.'

'Ah, madam! you see my very thoughts.' And the young woman hung her head a moment and blushed. 'But how to let him know, madam? That passes my skill. He is gone to Italy; but what part, that I know not. Stay! he named the cities he should visit. Florence was one, and Rome. But then—'

Finally, being a sensible girl, she divined that a letter, addressed 'My Gerard, Italy,' might chance to miscarry; and she looked imploringly at her friend for counsel.

'You are come to the right place, and at the right time,' said the old lady. 'Here was this Hans Memling with me to-day; he is going to Italy, girl, no later than next week, "to improve his hand," he says. Not before 't was needed, I do assure you.'

'But how is he to find my Gerard?'

'Why, he knows your Gerard, child. They have supped here more than once, and were like hand and glove. Now, as his business is the same as Gerard's—'

'What! he is a painter, then?'

'He passes for one. He will visit the same places as Gerard, and, soon or late, he must fall in with him. Wherefore, get you a long letter written, and copy out this pardon into it, and I 'll answer for the messenger. In six months at farthest Gerard shall get it; and when he shall get it, then will he kiss it, and put it in his bosom, and come flying home. What are you smiling at? And now what makes your cheeks so red? And what you are smothering me for, I cannot think. Yes! happy days are coming to my little pearl.'

Meantime Martin sat in the kitchen, with the black-jack before him and Reicht Heynes spinning beside him; and, wow! but she pumped him that night.

This Hans Memling was an old pupil of Jan Van Eyck and his sister. He was a painter, notwithstanding Margaret's sneer, and a good soul enough, with one fault. He loved the 'nipperkin, canakin, and the brown bowl' more than they deserve. This singular *penchant* kept him from amassing fortune, and was the cause that he often came to Margaret Van Eyck for a meal, and sometimes for a groat. But this gave her a claim on him, and she knew he would not

trifle with any commission she should intrust to him.

The letter was duly written, and left with Margaret Van Eyck; and the following week, sure enough, Hans Memling returned from Flanders. Margaret Van Eyck gave him the letter, and a piece of gold toward his travelling expenses. He seemed in a hurry to be off.

'All the better,' said the old artist; 'he will be the sooner in Italy.'

But as there are horses who burn and rage to start, and after the first yard or two want the whip, so all this hurry cooled into inaction when Hans got as far as the principal hostelry of Tergou, and saw two of his boon companions sitting in the bay window. He went in for a parting glass with them; but when he offered to pay, they would not hear of it. No; he was going a long journey. They would treat him; everybody must treat him, the landlord and all.

It resulted from this treatment that his tongue got as loose as if the wine had been oil, and he confided to the convivial crew that he was going to show the Italians how to paint; next he sang his exploits in battle, for he had handled a pike; and his amorous successes with women, not present to oppose their version of the incidents.

In short, 'plenus rimarum erat: huc illuc diffluebat;' and among the miscellaneous matters that oozed out, he must blab that he was intrusted with a letter to a townsman of theirs, one Gerard, a good fellow. He added, 'You are all good fellows;' and, to impress his eulogy, slapped Sybrandt on the back so heartily as to drive the breath out of his body.

Sybrandt got round the table to avoid this muscular approval; but listened to every word, and learned for the first time that Gerard was gone to Italy. However, to make sure, he affected to doubt it.

'My brother Gerard is never in Italy.'

'Ye lie, ye cur,' roared Hans, taking instantly the irascible turn, and not being clear enough to see that he who now sat opposite him was the same he had praised, and hit, when beside him. 'If he is ten times your brother, he is in Italy. What call ye this? There, read me that superscription!' and he flung down a letter on the table.

Sybrandt took it up, and examined it gravely; but eventually laid it down, with the remark that he could not read. However, one of the company, by some immense fortuity, could read; and, proud of so rare an accomplishment, took it, and read it out: 'To Gerard Eliassoen, of

Tergou. These by the hand of the trusty Hans Memling, with all speed.'

'T is excellently well writ,' said the rabbi, examining every letter.

'Ay!' said Hans, bombastically, 'and small wonder; 't is writ by a famous hand — by Margaret, sister of Jan Van Eyck. Blessed and honoured be his memory! She is my friend of mine, is Margaret Van Eyck.'

Miscellaneous Hans then diverged into forty topics.

Sybrandt stole out of the company, and went in search of Cornelis.

They put their heads together over the news. Italy was an immense distance off. If they could only keep him there!

'Keep him there? Nothing would keep him long from his Margaret.'

'Curse her!' said Sybrandt. 'Why didn't she die when she was about it?'

'*She* die? She would outlive the pest to vex us.' And Cornelis was wroth at her selfishness in not dying, to oblige.

These two black sheep kept putting their heads together, and tainting each other worse and worse, till at last their corrupt hearts conceived a plan for keeping Gerard in Italy all his life, and so securing his share of their father's

substance. But when they had planned it, they were no nearer the execution; for that required talent. So iniquity came to a stand still. But presently, as if Satan had come between the two heads, and whispered into the right ear of one and the left of the other simultaneously, they both burst out, —

'The burgomaster!'

They went to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, and he received them at once; for the man who is under the torture of suspense catches eagerly at knowledge. Certainty is often painful, but seldom, like suspense, intolerable.

'You have news of Gerard?' said he, eagerly.

Then they told about the letter and Hans Memling. He listened with restless eye. 'Who writ the letter?'

'Margaret Van Eyck,' was the reply; for they naturally thought the contents were by the same hand as the superscription.

'Are ye sure?' And he went to a drawer and drew out a paper written by Margaret Van Eyck while treating with the burgh for her house. 'Was it writ like this?'

'Yes. 'T is the same writing,' said Sybrandt, boldly.

'Good. And now what would ye of me?' said Glyshrecht, with beating heart, but a carelessness so well feigned that it staggered them. They fumbled with their bonnets, and stammered, and spoke a word or two, then hesitated and beat about the bush, and let out by degrees that they wanted a letter written, to say something that might keep Gerard in Italy; and this letter they proposed to substitute in Hans Memling's wallet for the one he carried.

While these fumbled with their bonnets and their iniquity, and vacillated between respect for a burgomaster and suspicion that this one was as great a rogue as themselves, and, somehow or other, on their side against Gerard, pros and cons were coursing one another to and fro in the keen old man's spirit. Vengeance said, 'Let Gerard come back and feel the weight of the law.' Prudence said, 'Keep him a thousand miles off.' But then prudence said also, 'Why do dirty work on a doubtful chance? Why put it in the power of these two rogues to tarnish your name?' Finally, his strong persuasion that Gerard was in possession of a secret by means of which he could wound him to the quick, coupled with his caution, found words thus: 'It is my duty to aid the citizens that cannot write. But for their

matter I will not be responsible. Tell me, then, what I shall write.'

'Something about this Margaret.'

'Ay, ay! that she is false; that she is married to another, I'll go bail.'

'Nay, burgomaster, nay! Not for all the world!' cried Sybrandt. 'Gerard would not believe it, or but half; and then he would come back to see. No; say that she is dead.'

'Dead! What, at her age? Will he credit that?'

'Sooner than the other. Why, she *was nearly* dead; so it is not to say a downright lie, after all.'

'Humph! And you think that will keep him in Italy?'

'We are sure of it; are we not, Cornelis?'

'Ay,' said Cornelis; 'our Gerard will never leave Italy now he is there. It was always his dream to get there. He would come back for his Margaret, but not for us. What cares he for us? He despises his own family; always did.'

'This would be a bitter pill to him,' said the old hypocrite. 'It will be for his good in the end,' replied the young one.

'What avails Famine wedding Thirst?' said Cornelis.

'And the grief you are preparing for him so coolly?' Ghysbrecht spoke sarcastically, but tasted his own vengeance all the time.

'Oh, a lie is not like a blow with a curtal axe. It hacks no flesh, and breaks no bones.'

'A curtal axe?' said Sybrandt; 'no, nor even like a stroke with a cudgel.' And he shot a sly envenomed glance at the burgomaster's broken nose.

Ghysbrecht's face darkened with ire when this adder's tongue struck his wound. But it told, as intended: the old man bristled with hate.

'Well,' said he, 'tell me what to write for you, and I must write it; but, take notice, you bear the blame if aught turns amiss. Not the hand which writes, but the tongue which dictates, doth the deed.'

The brothers assented warmly, sneering within. Ghysbrecht then drew his inkhorn toward him, and laid the specimen of Margaret Van Eyck's writing before him, and made some inquiries as to the size and shape of the letter, when an unlooked-for interruption occurred. Jorian Ketel burst hastily into the room, and looked vexed at not finding him alone.

'Thou seest I have matter on hand, good fellow.'

matter I will not be responsible. Tell me, then, what I shall write.'

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'A curtal axe?' said Sytzbant; 'no, nor even like a stroke with a cudgel.' And he shot a sly envenomed glance at the burgomaster's broken nose.

Ghysbrecht's face darkened with ire when this adder's tongue struck his wound. But it told, as intended: the old man bristled with hate.

'Well,' said he, 'tell me what to write for you, and I must write it; but, take notice, you bear the blame if aught turns amiss. Not the hand which writes, but the tongue which dictates, doth the deed.'

The brothers assented warmly, sneering within. Ghysbrecht then drew his inkhorn toward him, and laid the specimen of Margaret Van Eyck's writing before him, and made some inquiries as to the size and shape of the letter, when an unlooked-for interruption occurred. Jorian Ketel burst hastily into the room, and looked vexed at not finding him alone.

'Thou seest I have matter on hand, good fellow.'

'Ay; but this is grave. I bring good news; but 't is not for every ear.'

The burgomaster rose, and drew Jorian aside into the embrasure of his deep window, and then the brothers heard them converse in low but eager tones. It ended by Ghysbrecht sending Jorian out to saddle his mule. He then addressed the black sheep with a sudden coldness that amazed them: —

'I prize the peace of households; but this is not a thing to be done in a hurry. We will see about it, — we will see.'

'But, burgomaster, the man will be gone. It will be too late.'

'Where is he?'

'At the hostelry, drinking.'

'Well, keep him drinking! We will see, — we will see.' And he sent them off discomfited.

To explain all this we must retrograde a step. This very morning, then, Margaret Brandt had met Jorian Ketel near her own door. He passed her with a scowl. This struck her, and she remembered him.

'Stay,' said she. 'Yes! it is the good man who saved him. Oh, why have you not been near me since? And why have you not come

for the parchments? Was it not true about the hundred crowns?'

Jorian gave a snort; but, seeing her face that looked so candid, began to think there might be some mistake. He told her he had come, and how he had been received.

'Alas!' said she, 'I knew nought of this. I lay at Death's door.' She then invited him to follow her, and took him into the garden and showed him the spot where the parchments were buried. 'Martin was for taking them up, but I would not let him. *He* put them there; and I said none should move them but you, who had earned them so well of him and me.'

'Give me a spade!' cried Jorian, eagerly. 'But stay! No; he is a suspicious man. You are sure they are there still?'

'I will openly take the blame if human hand hath touched them.'

'Then keep them but two hours more, I prithee, good Margaret,' said Jorian, and ran off to the Stadthouse of Tergou a joyful man.

The burgomaster jogged along toward Sevenbergen with Jorian striding beside him, giving him assurance that in an hour's time the missing parchments would be in his hand.

'Ah, master!' said he, 'lucky for us it was n't a thief that took them.'

'Not a thief? not a thief? What call you him, then?'

'Well, saving your presence, I call him a jackdaw. This is jackdaw's work, if ever there was. Take the thing you are least in need of, and hide it,—that 's a jackdaw. I should know,' added Jorian, oracularly, 'for I was brought up along with a chough. He and I were born the same year, but he cut his teeth long before me; and, wow! but my life was a burden for years all along of him. If you had but a hole in your hose no bigger than a groat, in went his beak like a gimlet; and, for stealing, Gerard all over. What he wanted least, and any poor Christian in the house wanted most, that went first. Mother was a notable woman; so, if she did but look round, away flew her thimble. Father lived by cord-waining, so about sunrise Jack went diligently off with his awl, his wax, and his twine. After that, make your bread how you could! One day I heard my mother tell him to his face he was enough to corrupt half a dozen other children; and he only cocked his eye at her, and next minute away with the nursling's shoe off his very foot. Now, this Gerard is tarred with the same stick. The parchments

are no more use to him than a thimble or an awl to Jack. He took 'em out of pure mischief and hid them ; and you would never have found them but for me.'

'I believe you are right,' said Ghysbrecht ; 'and I have vexed myself more than need.'

When they came to Peter's gate he felt uneasy.

'I wish it had been anywhere but here.'

Jorian reassured him.

'The girl is honest and friendly,' said he. 'She had nothing to do with taking them, I 'll be sworn ;' and he led him into the garden. 'There, master, if a face is to be believed, here they lie ; and, see, the mould *is* loose.'

He ran for a spade which was stuck up in the ground at some distance, and soon went to work and uncovered a parchment. Ghysbrecht saw it, and thrust him aside, and went down on his knees and tore it out of the hole. His hands trembled and his face shone. He threw out parchment after parchment, and Jorian dusted them, and cleaned them, and shook them. Now, when Ghysbrecht had thrown out a great many, his face began to darken and lengthen ; and when he came to the last, he put his hands to his temples and seemed to be all amazed.

'What mystery lies here?' he gasped. 'Are fiends mocking me? Dig deeper! There *must* be another.'

Jorian drove the spade in, and threw out quantities of hard mould. In vain. And even while he dug, his master's mood had changed.

'Treason! treachery!' he cried. 'You knew of this.'

'Knew what, master, in Heaven's name?'

'Caitiff! you knew there was another one worth all these twice told.'

''T is false!' cried Jorian, made suspicious by the other's suspicion. ''T is a trick to rob me of my hundred crowns. Oh, I know you, burgomaster!' And Jorian was ready to whimper.

A mellow voice fell on them both like oil upon the waves. 'No, good man; it is not false, nor yet is it quite true. There was another parchment.'

'There, there, there! Where is it?'

'But,' continued Margaret, calmly, 'it was not a town record (so you have gained your hundred crowns, good man); it was but a private deed between the burgomaster here and my grandfather Flor—'

'Hush, hush!'

'—is Brandt.'

'Where is it, girl? That is all we must [illegible] know.'

'Have patience, and I shall tell you. [illegible] rard read the title of it, and he said [illegible] as much yours as the bargainer [illegible] put it apart, to read it with me at [illegible]

'It is in the house, then,' said the [illegible] master, recovering his calmness.

'No, sir,' said Margaret, [illegible] Then, in a voice that faltered [illegible] hunted — my poor Gerard — is [illegible] close — that you gave him — [illegible] of aught — but his life — [illegible] parchment was in his bosom, and he said [illegible] it with him.'

'Whither, whither?'

'Ask me no more, sir. [illegible] to question me thus? [illegible] good man, I put [illegible] out here, and bore [illegible] old man. For when I [illegible] has brought on him and me, [illegible] more than I can bear;' and she [illegible] untary shudder, and [illegible] hand to her head, crying [illegible]

Remorse for the past and dread of the future, — the slow, but, as he saw [illegible] future, — avarice, and fear, [illegible] in one

short moment at Ghysbrecht's tough heart. He hung his head, and his arms fell listless by his sides. A coarse chuckle made him start round, and there stood Martin Wittenhaagen leaning on his bow, and sneering from ear to ear. At sight of the man and his grinning face, Ghysbrecht's worst passions awoke.

'Ho! attach him, seize him, traitor and thief!' cried he. 'Dog, thou shalt pay for all.'

Martin, without a word, calmly thrust the duke's pardon under Ghysbrecht's nose. He looked, and had not a word to say.

Martin followed up his advantage. 'The duke and I are soldiers. He won't let you greasy burghers trample on an old comrade. He bade me carry you a message too.'

'The duke send a message to me?'

'Ay! I told him of your masterful doings, — of your imprisoning Gerard for loving a girl; and says he, "Tell him this is to be a king, not a burgomaster. I 'll have no kings in Holland but one. Bid him be more humble, or I 'll hang him at his own door"' (Ghysbrecht trembled. He thought the duke capable of the deed) '"as I hanged the burgomaster of Thingembob." The duke could not mind which of you he had hung, or in what part, — such trifles stick not in a soldier's memory; but he was sure he had

hanged one of you for grinding poor folk, "And I 'm the man to hang another," quoth the good duke.'

These repeated insults from so mean a man, coupled with his invulnerability, shielded as he was by the duke, drove the choleric old man into a fit of impotent fury. He shook his fist at the soldier, and tried to threaten him, but could not speak for the rage and mortification that choked him; then he gave a sort of screech, and coiled himself up in eye and form like a rattlesnake about to strike, and spat furiously upon Martin's doublet.

The thick-skinned soldier treated this ebullition with genuine contempt. 'Here 's a venomous old toad! He knows a kick from this foot would send him to his last home; and he wants me to cheat the gallows. But I have slain too many men in fair fight to lift limb against anything less than a man; and this I count no man. What is it, in Heaven's name? — an old goat's-skin bag full o' rotten bones.'

'My mule! my mule!' screamed Ghysbrecht.

Jorian helped the old man up trembling in every joint. Once in the saddle, he seemed to gather in a moment unnatural vigour; and the figure that went flying to Tergou was truly weird-like and terrible, — so old and wizened

the face, so white and reverend the streaming hair, so baleful the eye, so fierce the fury which shook the bent frame that went spurring like mad; while the quavering voice yelled, 'I 'll make their hearts ache! I 'll make their hearts ache! I 'll make their hearts ache! I 'll make their hearts ache! All of them,—all! all! all!'

The black sheep sat disconsolate amidst the convivial crew, and eyed Hans Memling's wallet. For more ease he had taken it off, and flung it on the table. How readily they could have slipped out that letter and put in another. For the first time in their lives they were sorry they had not learned to write, like their brother.

And now Hans began to talk of going, and the brothers agreed in a whisper to abandon their project for the time. They had scarcely resolved this, when Dierich Brower stood suddenly in the doorway, and gave them a wink.

They went out to him. 'Come to the burgomaster with all speed,' said he.

They found Ghysbrecht seated at a table, pale and agitated. Before him lay Margaret Van Eyck's handwriting. 'I have written what you

desired,' said he, 'Now for the superscription. What were the words? Did ye see?'

'We cannot read,' said Cornelis.

'Then is all this labour lost,' cried Ghysbrecht, angrily. 'Dolts!'

'Nay, but,' said Sybrandt, 'I heard the words read, and I have not lost them. They were, "To Gerard Eliassoen, these by the hand of the trusty Hans Memling, with all speed."'

''Tis well. Now, how was the letter folded? How big was it?'

'Longer than that one, and not so long as this.'

''Tis well. Where is he?'

'At the hostelry.'

'Come, then, take you this groat, and treat him. Then ask to see the letter, and put this in place of it. Come to me with the other letter.'

The brothers assented, took the letter, and went to the hostelry.

They had not been gone a minute when Dierich Brower issued from the Stadthouse, and followed them. He had his orders not to let them out of his sight till the true letter was in his master's hands. He watched outside the hostelry. He had not long to wait. They

came out almost immediately, with downcast looks. Dierich made up to them.

'Too late!' they cried; 'too late! He is gone.'

'Gone? How long?'

'Scarce five minutes. Cursed chance!'

'You must go back to the burgomaster at once,' said Dierich Brower.

'To what end?'

'No matter. Come;' and he hurried them to the Stadthouse.

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten was not the man to accept a defeat. 'Well,' said he, on hearing the ill news, 'suppose he is gone. Is he mounted?'

'No.'

'Then what hinders you to come up with him?'

'But what avails coming up with him? There are no hostelries on the road he is gone.'

'Fools!' said Ghysbrecht, 'is there no way of emptying a man's pockets but liquor and sleight of hand?'

A meaning look that passed between Ghysbrecht and Dierich aided the brothers' comprehension. They changed colour, and lost all zeal for the business.

'No! no! we don't hate our br er.

won't get ourselves hanged to spite him,' said Sybrandt; 'that would be a fool's trick.'

'Hanged?' cried Ghysbrecht. 'Am I not the burgomaster? How can ye be hanged? I see how 't is; ye fear to tackle one man, being two, — hearts of hare, that ye are! Oh, why cannot I be young again? I 'd do it single-handed.'

The old man now threw off all disguise, and showed them his heart was in this deed. He then flattered and besought, and jeered them alternately; but he found no eloquence could move them to an action, however dishonourable, which was attended with danger. At last he opened a drawer and showed them a pile of silver coins.

'Change but those letters for me,' he said, 'and each of you shall thrust one hand into this drawer, and take away as many of them as you can hold.'

The effect was magical. Their eyes glittered with desire. Their whole bodies seemed to swell, and rise into full masculine energy.

'Swear it, then,' said Sybrandt.

'I swear it.'

'No; on the crucifix.'

Ghysbrecht swore upon the crucifix.

The next minute the brothers were on the

road, in pursuit of Hans Memling. They came in sight of him about two leagues from Tergou. But though they knew he had no weapon but his staff, they were too prudent to venture on him in daylight; so they fell back.

But being now three leagues and more from the town, and on a grassy road, sun down, moon not yet up, honest Hans suddenly found himself attacked before and behind at once by men with uplifted knives, who cried in loud though somewhat shaky voices, 'Stand and deliver!'

The attack was so sudden, and so well planned, that Hans was dismayed. 'Slay me not, good fellows,' he cried. 'I am but a poor man, and ye shall have my all.'

'So be it, then. Live! But empty thy wallet.'

'There is nought in my wallet, good friends, but one letter.'

'That we shall see,' said Sybrandt, who was the one in front. 'Well, it *is* a letter.'

'Take it not from me, I pray you. 'T is worth nought; and the good dame would fret that writ it.'

'There,' said Sybrandt, 'take back thy letter; and now empty thy pouch. Come, tarry not!'

But by this time Hans had recovered his con-

fusion, and from a certain flutter in Sybrandt, and hard breathing of Cornelis, aided by an indescribable consciousness, felt sure the pair he had to deal with were no heroes. He pretended to fumble for his money, then suddenly thrust his staff fiercely into Sybrandt's face, and drove him staggering; and lent Cornelis a backhanded slash on the ear that sent him twirling like a weather-cock in March; then whirled his weapon over his head and danced about the road like a figure on springs, shouting, 'Come on, ye thieving loons! Come on!'

It was a plain invitation; yet they misunderstood it so utterly as to take to their heels, with Hans after them, he shouting, 'Stop thieves!' and they howling with fear and pain as they ran.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHANGE came over Margaret Brandt. She went about her household duties like one in a dream. If Peter did but speak a little quickly to her, she started and fixed two terrified eyes on him. She went less often to her friend Margaret Van Eyck, and was ill at her ease when there. Instead of meeting her warm old friend's caresses, she used to receive them passive and trembling, and sometimes almost shrink from them. But the most extraordinary thing was, she never would go outside her own house in daylight. When she went to Tergou it was after dusk, and she returned before daybreak. She would not even go to matins. At last Peter, unobservant as he was, noticed it, and asked her the reason.

'The folk all look at me so.'

One day, Margaret Van Eyck asked her what was the matter. A scared look and a flood of tears were all the reply. The old lady expostulated gently: 'What! sweetheart, afraid to confide your sorrows to me?'

'I have no sorrows, madam, but of my own making. I am kinder treated than I deserve, especially in this house.'

'Then why not come oftener, my dear?'

'I come oftener than I deserve;' and she sighed deeply.

'There, Reicht is bawling for you,' said Margaret Van Eyck. 'Go, child! — What on earth can it be?'

Turning possibilities over in her mind, she thought Margaret must be mortified at the contempt with which she was treated by Gerard's family. 'I will take them to task for it, at least such of them as are women;' and the very next day she put on her hood and cloak, and followed by Reicht, went to the hosier's house. Catherine received her with much respect, and thanked her with tears for her kindness to Gerard. But when, encouraged by this, her visitor diverged to Margaret Brandt, Catherine's eyes dried, and her lips turned to half the size, and she looked as only obstinate, ignorant women can look. When they put on this cast of features, you might as well attempt to soften or convince a brick-wall. Margaret Van Eyck tried, but all in vain. So then, not being herself used to be thwarted, she got provoked, and at last went out hastily with an abrupt and mutilated courtesy,

which Catherine returned with an air rather of defiance than obeisance.

Outside the door Margaret Van Eyck found Reicht conversing with a pale girl on crutches. Margaret Van Eyck was pushing by them with heightened colour, and a scornful toss intended for the whole family, when suddenly a little delicate hand glided timidly into hers, and looking round she saw two dove-like eyes, with the water in them, that sought hers gratefully, and at the same time imploringly. The old lady read this wonderful look, complex as it was, and down went her choler. She stooped and kissed Kate's brow. 'I see,' said she. 'Mind, then, I leave it to you.' Returned home, she said, 'I have been to a house to-day where I have seen a very common thing and a very uncommon thing: I have seen a stupid, obstinate woman, and I have seen an angel in the flesh, with a face— If I had it here I'd take down my brushes once more, and try and paint it.'

Little Kate did not belie the good opinion so hastily formed of her. She waited a better opportunity, and told her mother what she had learned from Reicht Heynes, that Margaret had shed her very blood for Gerard in the wood.

'See, mother, how she loves him.'

'Who would not love him?'

'Oh, mother, think if I [illegible]

'Ay, wench. She [illegible] doubt, as well as we [illegible] sight of blood in [illegible]

This was a point [illegible] tried to follow it up she was [illegible]

About a month after [illegible] Dalgetty tribe, returning from [illegible] gundy, brought a letter [illegible] hosier's house. He was [illegible] the rest of the family [illegible] laid the letter on the table [illegible] refusing all question for [illegible] to Sevenbergen.

The letter was addressed [illegible] curiously enough, though [illegible] read, they could all tell it was [illegible] writing.

'And your father must be [illegible] rine. 'Are ye not ashamed if [illegible] one that can read your [illegible]

But although the words were to them [illegible] hieroglyphics are to us, there was something in the letter they could read. [illegible] speak without words. [illegible] man's limits, it can steal through the eye into the heart and brain alike of the learned and unlearned: and it can [illegible]

yet lose nothing. It is at the mercy of no translator, for it writes an universal language.

When, therefore, they saw this, —

which Gerard had drawn with his pencil between the two short paragraphs of which his letter consisted, they read it; and it went straight to their hearts.

Gerard was bidding them farewell.

As they gazed on that simple sketch, in every turn and line of which they recognized his manner, Gerard seemed present, and bidding them farewell.

The women wept over it till they could see it no longer.

Giles said, 'Poor Gerard!' in a lower voice than seemed to belong to him.

Even Cornelis and Sybrandt felt a momentary remorse, and sat silent and gloomy.

But how to get the words read to them?

They were loath to show their [illegible] and their emotion to a stranger.

'The Dame Van [illegible] [illegible]

'And so I will, Kate. [illegible] She loves Gerard, too. [illegible] hear of him. I was [illegible] when he came here; but I will make my [illegible] then she will tell me [illegible] to me.'

She was soon at Margaret Van [illegible] Reicht took her into a [illegible] minute; she is at her [illegible]

There was a young woman [illegible] pensively by the stove; [illegible] teously made way for the [illegible]

'Thank you, young [illegible] are cold, and your stove is a [illegible] then, while warming her [illegible] companion furtively from [illegible] clusive. The young person [illegible] wimple, but her gown was [illegible] which was in those [illegible] rank or wealth. But what [illegible] rine was the candour and [illegible] She felt sure of sympathy from [illegible] tenance, and began to [illegible]

'Now, what [illegible] lady? It is a [illegible]

boy that is far away in some savage part or other. And I take shame to say that none of us can read it. I wonder whether you can read?'

'Yes.'

'Can ye, now? It is much to your credit, my dear. I dare say she won't be long; but every minute is an hour to a poor longing mother.'

'I will read it to you.'

'Bless you, my dear; bless you!'

In her unfeigned eagerness she never noticed the suppressed eagerness with which the hand was slowly put out to take the letter. She did not see the tremor with which the fingers closed on it.

'Come, then, read it to me, prithee. I am wearying for it.'

'The first words are, —

'"To my honoured parents."'

'Ay! and he always did honour us, poor soul.'

'"God and the saints have you in his holy keeping, and bless you by night and by day. Your one harsh deed is forgotten; your years of love remembered."'

Catherine laid her hand on her bosom, and sank back in her chair with one long sob.

'Then comes this, madam. It doth speak for itself : —

'"A long farewell."'

'Ay, go on. Bless you, girl. You give me sorry comfort ; still 't is comfort.'

'"To my brothers Cornelis and Sybrand . Be content ; you will see me no more :"'

'What does that mean ? Ah !'

'"To my sister Kate : Little sage, of my father's house. Be kind to *her* — "

'Ah !'

'That is Margaret Brandt, my dear — my sweetheart, poor soul. I've not been [illegible] her, my dear. Forgive me, Gerard.

'"— for poor Gerard's sake, since [illegible] her is death — to — me — " [illegible] ture, resenting the poor girl's struggle for unnatural composure, suddenly gave way, and she sank from her chair and lay [illegible] letter in her hand, and her head on [illegible] knees.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPERIENCED women are not frightened when a woman faints, nor do they hastily attribute it to anything but physical causes, which they have often seen produce it. Catherine bustled about, laid the girl down with her head on the floor quite flat, opened the window, and unloosed her dress as she lay. Not till she had done all this did she step to the door and say, rather loudly, —

'Come here, if you please.'

Margaret Van Eyck and Reicht came and found Margaret lying quite flat, and Catherine beating her hands.

'Oh, my poor girl! What have you done to her?'

'Me?' said Catherine, angrily.

'What has happened, then?'

'Nothing, madam; nothing more than is natural in her situation.'

Margaret Van Eyck coloured with ire.

'You do well to speak so coolly,' said she, — 'you that are the cause of her situation.'

'That I am not,' said Catherine, bluntly, 'nor any woman born.'

'What! Was it not you and your husband that kept them apart? And now he is gone to Italy all alone. Situation indeed? You have broken her heart amongst you.'

'Why, madam? Who is it then, in Heaven's name? To hear you one would think this was my Gerard's lass. But that can't be. This fur never cost less than five crowns the ell; besides, this young gentlewoman is a wife,—or ought to be.'

'Of course she ought. And who is the cause she is none? Who came between them at the very altar?'

'God forgive them, whoever it was,' said Catherine, gravely. 'Me it was not, nor my man.'

'Well,' said the other, a little softened, 'now you have seen her perhaps you will not be quite so bitter against her, madam. She is coming to, thank Heaven.'

'Me bitter against her?' said Catherine. 'No; that is all over. Poor soul! trouble behind her and trouble afore her; and to think of my setting her, of all living women, to read Gerard's letter to me. Ay, and that was what made her go off, I 'll be sworn. She is coming

to. What, sweetheart? Be not afeard; none are here but friends.'

They seated her in an easy chair. As the colour was creeping back to her face and lips Catherine drew Margaret Van Eyck aside: —

'Is she staying with you, if you please?'

'No, madam.'

'I would n't let her go back to Sevenbergen to-night, then.'

'That is as she pleases. She still refuses to bide the night.'

'Ay, but you are older than she is; you can make her. There, she is beginning to notice.' Catherine then put her mouth to Margaret Van Eyck's ear for half a moment. It did not seem time enough to whisper a word, far less a sentence; but on some topics women can flash communication to woman like lightning, or thought itself.

The old lady started, and whispered back: 'It 's false! It is a calumny! It is monstrous! Look at her face. It is blasphemy to accuse such a face.'

'Tut! tut! tut!' said the other; 'you might as well say this is not my hand. I ought to know; and I tell ye it is *so*.'

Then, much to Margaret Van Eyck's surprise, she went up to the girl, and taking her round

the neck, kissed her [illegible]
Gerard, and you shed [illegible]
hear; his own words [illegible]
blame,—the very words [illegible]
Ay, Gerard, my child [illegible]
her. But I'll make [illegible]
You are my daughter [illegible]

Another warm embrace [illegible]
pact, and the woman [illegible]

Margaret lay back [illegible]
smile stole over her face [illegible]
kissed her and called her [illegible]
next moment she saw [illegible]
her with a vexed air

'I wonder you let that [illegible]

'His mother,' [illegible]
proachfully.

'Mother or no mother [illegible]
touch you if you knew what [illegible]
my ear about you.'

'About me?' said Margaret [illegible]

'Ay, about you, whom [illegible]
to-night.'

The old lady was proceeding, with some hesitation and choice of language, to make Margaret share her indignation, when an unlooked-for interruption closed her lips: the young woman slid from her chair to her knees,

and began to pray piteously to her for pardon. From the words and the manner of her penitence a bystander would have gathered she had inflicted some cruel wrong, some intolerable insult, upon her venerable friend.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE little party at the [illegible] table discussing the [illegible] their mother returned, and [illegible] glance all round the little circle, and the [illegible] flat on the table. She repeated every [illegible] it by memory, following the lines with [illegible] ger, to cheat herself and hearers into the [illegible] that she could read the words [illegible] suddenly lifting her head, she [illegible] look on Cornelis and Sybrandt [illegible]

On this the storm that had long been brewing burst on their heads. Catherine seemed to swell like an angry hen ruffling her feathers, and out of her mouth came a [illegible] of wisdom and twaddle, of great and mean invective, such as no man that ever was born could utter in one current, — and not many women.

The following is a fair though a small sample of her words, only they were uttered all in one breath : —

'I have long had my doubts that you blew the flame betwixt Gerard and your father, and set that old rogue, Ghysbrecht, on. And now here are Gerard's own written words to prove it. You have driven your own flesh and blood into a far land, and robbed the mother that bore you of her darling, the pride of her eye, the joy of her heart. But you are all of a piece from end to end. When you were all boys together, my others were a comfort; but you were a curse, — mischievous and sly, and took a woman half a day to keep your clothes whole. For why? Work wears cloth, but play cuts it. With the beard comes prudence; but none came to you. Still the last to go to bed, and the last to leave it. And why? Because honesty goes to bed early, and industry rises betimes. Where there are two lie-abeds in a house there are a pair of ne'er-do-weels. Often I 've sat and looked at your ways, and wondered where ye came from; ye don't take after your father, and ye are no more like me than a wasp is to an ant. Sure ye were changed in the cradle, or the cuckoo dropped ye on my floor; for ye have not our hands nor our hearts. Of all my blood none but you ever jeered them that God afflicted; but often when my back was turned I 've heard you mock at Giles because he is not so big as

some, and at my lily Kate because she is not so strong as a Flanders mare. After that rob a church an you will! for you can be no worse in His eyes that made both Kate and Giles, and in mine that suffered for them, poor darlings, as I did for you, — you paltry, unfeeling, treasonable curs! No, I will not hush, my daughter; they have filled the cup too full. It takes a deal to turn a mother's heart against the sons she has nursed upon her knees; and many is the time I have winked and would n't see too much, and bitten my tongue, lest their father should know them as I do. He would have put them to the door that moment. But now they have filled the cup too full. And where got ye all this money? For this last month you have been rolling in it. You never wrought for it. I wish I may never hear from other mouths how ye got it. It is since that night you were out so late, and *your* head came back so swelled, Cornelis. Sloth and greed are ill mated, my masters. Lovers of money must sweat or steal. Well, if you robbed any poor soul of it, it was some woman, I 'll go bail; for a man would drive you with his naked hand. No matter; it is good for one thing. It has shown me how you will guide our gear if ever it comes to be yourn. I have watched you, my lads,

this while. You have spent a groat to-day between you. And I spend scarce a groat a week, and keep you all, — good *and* bad. No! give up waiting for the shoes that will maybe walk behind your coffin; for this shop and this house shall never be yourn. Gerard is our heir, — poor Gerard whom you have banished and done your best to kill; after that never call me mother again! But you have made him tenfold dearer to me. My poor lost boy! I shall soon see him again; shall hold him in my arms, and set him on my knees. Ay, you may stare! You are too crafty, and yet not crafty enow. You cut the stalk away; but you left the seed, — the seed that shall outgrow you, and outlive you. Margaret Brandt is quick, and it is Gerard's; and what is Gerard's is mine. And I have prayed the saints it may be a boy; and it will, — it must. Kate, when I found it was so, my bowels yearned over her child unborn as if it had been my own. He is our heir. He will outlive us. You will not: for a bad heart in a carcass is like the worm in a nut, — soon brings the body to dust. So, Kate, take down Gerard's bib and tucker that are in the drawer you wot of, and one of these days we will carry them to Sevenbergen. We will borrow Peter Buyskens's cart, and go comfort Gerard's wife

under her burden. She is his wife. Who is Ghysbrecht Van Swieten? Can he come between a couple and the altar, and sunder those that God and the priest make one? She is my daughter; and I am as proud of her as I am of you, Kate, almost. And as for *you*, keep out of my way awhile; for you are like the black dog in my eyes.'

Cornelis and Sybrandt took the hint and slunk out, aching with remorse and impenitence and hate. They avoided her eye as much as ever they could; and for many days she never spoke a word, good, bad, or indifferent, to either of them. 'Liberaverat animum suum.'

CHAPTER XVII.

CATHERINE was a good housewife who seldom left home for a day, and then one thing or another always went amiss. She was keenly conscious of this, and watching for a slack tide in things domestic, put off her visit to Sevenbergen from day to day; and one afternoon that it really could have been managed, Peter Buyskens's mule was out of the way.

At last, one day Eli asked her before all the family whether it was true she had thought of visiting Margaret Brandt.

'Ay, my man.'

'Then I do forbid you.'

'Oh, do you?'

'I do.'

'Then there is no more to be said, I suppose,' said she, colouring.

'Not a word,' replied Eli, sternly.

When she was alone with her daughter she was very severe, not upon Eli, but upon herself. 'Behooved me rather go thither like a cat at a

robin. But this was me all over. [illegible] silly hen that can lay no egg without [illegible] and convening all the house to [illegible] Next time you and I are after [illegible] amiss, let's do't in Heaven [illegible] there, and not take time to think [illegible] less talk; so then if they take [illegible] can say, "Alack! we knew [illegible] no ill. Now, who'd ever [illegible] two pins I'd go thither [illegible]

Defiance so wild and [illegible] Kate. 'Nay, mother: with [illegible] come round.'

'And so will Michaelmas [illegible] was so bent on you seeing [illegible] could have put our heads together about [illegible] Say what they will, there [illegible] beast but by the *eye*. And [illegible] more sons, I'd [illegible] till such time as I had [illegible] her and seen *Quicksands*. Say you, I should have thought of that before condemning Gerard his fancy. But there! life's a school, and the lesson ne'er done: we put down one fault and take up t'other, and so go blundering here, and blundering there, till we blunder into our graves, and there's an end of us.'

'Mother,' said Kate, timidly.

'Well, what is a-coming now? No good news though, by the look of you. What on earth can make the poor wench so scared?'

'An avowal she hath to make,' faltered Kate, faintly.

'Now, there is a noble word for ye,' said Catherine, proudly. 'Our Gerard taught thee that, I 'll go bail. Come then, out with thy vowel.'

'Well then, sooth to say, I have seen her.'

'Anan?'

'And spoken with her to boot.'

'And never told me? After this, marvels are dirt.'

'Mother, you were so hot against her. I waited till I could tell you without angering you worse.'

Ay,' said Catherine, half sadly, half bitterly, 'like mother, like daughter: cowardice, it is our bane. The others I whiles buffet; or how would the house fare? But did you, Kate, ever have harsh word or look from your poor mother, that you — Nay, I will not have ye cry, girl; ten to one ye had your reason. So rise up, brave heart, and tell me all, — better late than ne'er; and first and foremost when ever, and how ever, wond you to Sevenbergen wi' your poor crutches, and I not know?'

'I never was there in my life; and, mammy dear, to say that I ne'er wished to see her that I will not, but I ne'er went nor sought to see her.'

'There, now,' said Catherine, disputatively, 'said I not 't was all unlike my girl to seek her unbeknown to me? Come now, for I 'm all agog.'

'Then thus 't was: It came to my ears, no matter how, — and prithee, good mother, on my knees ne'er ask me how, — that Gerard was a prisoner in the Stadthouse tower.'

'Ah!'

'By father's behest, as 't was pretended.'

Catherine uttered a sigh that was almost a moan. 'Blacker than I thought,' she muttered, faintly.

'Giles and I went out at night to bid him be of good cheer; and there at the tower foot was a brave lass, quite strange to me, I vow, on the same errand.'

'Lookee there now, Kate.'

'At first we did properly frighten each other, through the place his bad name, and our poor heads being so full o' divels, and we whitened a bit in moonshine. But next moment, quo' I, "You are Margaret." "And you are Kate," quo' she. Think on 't!'

'Did one ever? — 'T was Gerard! He will have been talking backards and forrards of thee to her, and her to thee.'

In return for this, Kate bestowed on Catherine one of the prettiest presents in nature, — the composite kiss; that is, she imprinted on her cheek a single kiss, which said, (1.) Quite correct. (2.) Good, clever mother, for guessing so right and quick. (3.) How sweet for us twain to be of one mind again after never having been otherwise. (4.) Etc.

'Now then, speak thy mind, child; Gerard is not here. Alas! what am I saying? Would to Heaven he were.'

'Well, then, mother, she is comely, and wrongs her picture but little.'

'Eh, dear; hark to young folk! I am for good acts, not good looks. Loves she my boy as he did ought to be loved?'

'Sevenbergen is farther from the Stadthouse than we are,' said Kate, thoughtfully; 'yet she was there afore me.'

Catherine nodded intelligence.

'Nay, more; she had got him out ere I came. Ay, down from the captives' tower.'

Catherine shook her head incredulously. 'The highest tower for miles! It is not feasible.'

'T is sooth though. She and an old man she

brought found means and wit to send him up a rope. There 't was, dangling from his prison: and our Giles went up it. When first I saw it hang, I said, "This is glamour." But when the frank lass's arms came round me, and her bosom did beat on mine, and her cheeks met, then said I, "'T is not glamour; 't is love." For she is not like me, but lusty and able: and dear heart, even I, poor frail creature, do feel sometimes as I could move the world for one I love. I love *you*, mother; and the man Gerard.'

'God bless her for 't! God bless her!'

'But —'

'But what, lamb?'

'Her love, is it for very certain [illegible] 'T is most strange; but that very [illegible] hath warmed your heart hath [illegible] mine toward her; poor [illegible] you know, mother, when all is [illegible]

'Humph! They have [illegible] together.'

'Ay; but they went as they came, [illegible] and bachelor.'

'The parson, saith he [illegible]'

'Nay, for that I know not.'

'Then I 'll take no man's word but [illegible] such a tangled skein.' After [illegible]

she added, 'Natheless, art right, girl; I 'll to Sevenbergen alone. A wife I am but not a slave. We are all in the dark here, and she holds the clew. I must question her, and no one by; least of all you. I 'll not take my lily to a house wi' a spot, — no, not to a palace o' gold and silver.'

The more Catherine pondered this conversation, the more she felt drawn toward Margaret; and moreover 'she was all agog' with curiosity, — a potent passion with us all, and nearly omnipotent with those who, like Catherine, do not slake it with reading. At last, one fine day, after dinner, she whispered to Kate, 'Keep the house from going to pieces, an ye can;' and donned her best kirtle and hood, and her scarlet clocked hose and her new shoes, and trudged briskly off to Sevenbergen, troubling no man's mule.

When she got there she inquired where Margaret Brandt lived. The first person she asked shook his head, and said, 'The name is strange to me.' She went a little farther and asked a girl of about fifteen who was standing at a door. 'Father,' said the girl, speaking into the house, 'here is another after that magician's daughter.' The man came out and told Catherine Peter Brandt's cottage was just outside the town on

the east side. 'You may see the chimney hence;' and he pointed it out to her. 'But you will not find them there, nother father nor daughter; they have left the town this week, bless you.'

'Say not so, good man, and me walken all the way from Tergou.'

'From Tergou? Then you must ha' met the soldier.'

'What soldier? Ay, I did meet a soldier.'

'Well, then, yon soldier was here seeking that selfsame Margaret.'

'Ay, and warn't a mad with us because she was gone?' put in the girl. 'His long beard and her cheek are no strangers, I warrant.'

'Say no more than ye know,' said Catherine, sharply. 'You are young to take to slandering your elders. Stay! tell me more about this soldier, good man.'

'Nay, I know no more than that he came hither seeking Margaret Brandt; and I told him she and her father had made a moonlight flit on 't this day sennight, and that some thought the devil had flown away with them, being magicians. "And," says he, "the devil fly away with thee for thy ill news;" that was my thanks. "But I doubt 't is a lie," said he. "An you think so," said I, "go and see."

"I will," said he, and burst out wi' a hantle o' gibberish, — my wife thinks 't was curses, — and hied him to the cottage. Presently back a comes, and sings t' other tune. "You were right and I was wrong," says he, and shoves a silver coin in my hand. Show it the wife, some of ye; then she 'll believe me. I have been called a liar once to-day.'

'It needs not,' said Catherine, inspecting the coin all the same.

'And he seemed quiet and sad-like, did n't he now, wench?'

'That a did,' said the young woman, warmly; 'and, dame, he was just as pretty a man as ever I clapped eyes on, — cheeks like a rose, and shining beard, and eyes in his head like sloes.'

'I saw he was well bearded,' said Catherine; 'but, for the rest, at my age I scan them not as when I was young and foolish. But he seemed right civil: doffed his bonnet to me as I had been a queen, and I did drop him my best reverence, for manners beget manners. But little I wist he had been her light o' love, and most likely the — Who bakes for this town?'

The man, not being acquainted with her, opened his eyes at this transition, swift and smooth.

'Well, dame, there be two: John Bush and Eric Donaldson. They both bide in this street.'

'Then, God be with you, good people,' said she, and proceeded; but her sprightly foot came flat on the ground now, and no longer struck it with little jerks and cocking heel. She asked the bakers whether Peter Brant had gone away in their debt. Bush said they were not customers. Donaldson said, 'Not a stiver. His daughter had come round and paid him the very night they went. Did n't believe they owed a copper in the town.' So Catherine got all the information of that kind she wanted with very little trouble.

'Can you tell me what sort this Margaret was?' said she, as she turned to go.

'Well, somewhat too reserved for my taste. I like a chatty customer, when I 'm not too busy. But she bore a high character for being a good daughter.'

'T is no small praise. A well-looking lass I am told?'

'Why, whence come you, wife?'

'From Tergou.'

'Oh, ay. Well, you shall judge: the lads 'clept her "the beauty of Sevenbergen;" the lasses did scout it merrily, and terribly pulled

her to pieces, and found so many faults no two could agree where the fault lay.'

'That is enough,' said Catherine. 'I see the bakers are no fools in Sevenbergen, and the young women no shallower than in other burghs.'

She bought a manchet of bread, — partly out of sympathy and justice (she kept a shop), partly to show her household how much better bread she gave them daily, — and returned to Tergou dejected.

Kate met her outside the town with beaming eyes.

'Well, Kate, lass, it is a happy thing I went; I am heart-broken. Gerard has been sore abused. The child is none of ourn, nor the mother from this hour.'

'Alas, mother, I fathom not your meaning.'

'Ask me no more, girl, but never mention her name to me again. That is all.'

Kate acquiesced with a humble sigh, and they went home together.

They found a soldier seated tranquilly by their fire. The moment they entered the door, he rose, and saluted them civilly. They stood and looked at him, — Kate with some little surprise, but Catherine with a great deal, and with rising indignation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DENYS, placed in the middle of his companions, lest he should be so mad as attempt escape, was carried off in an agony of grief and remorse. For his sake Gerard had abandoned the German route to Rome. And what was his reward? — left all alone in the centre of Burgundy. This was the thought which maddened Denys most, and made him now rave at heaven and earth, now fall into a gloomy silence so savage and sinister that it was deemed prudent to disarm him. They caught up their leader just outside the town, and the whole cavalcade drew up and baited at the Tête d'Or.

The young landlady, though much occupied with the count, and still more with the Bastard, caught sight of Denys, and asked him somewhat anxiously what had become of his young companion?

Denys, with a burst of grief, told her all, and prayed her to send after Gerard. 'Now he is parted from me, he will maybe listen to my

rede,' said he; 'poor wretch, he loves not solitude.'

The landlady gave a toss of her head. 'I trow I have been somewhat over-kind already,' said she, and turned rather red.

'You will not?'

'Not I.'

'Then —' and he poured a volley of curses and abuse upon her.

She turned her back upon him, and went off whimpering, and saying she was not used to be cursed at; and ordered her hind to saddle two mules.

Denys went north with his troop, mute and drooping over his saddle; and quite unknown to him that veracious young lady made an equestrian toilet in only forty minutes, — she being really in a hurry, — and spurred away with her servant in the opposite direction.

At dark, after a long march, the Bastard and his men reached the White Hart; their arrival caused a prodigious bustle, and it was some time before Manon discovered her old friend among so many. When she did, she showed it only by heightened colour. She did not claim the acquaintance. The poor soul was already beginning to scorn, —

'The base degrees by which she did ascend.'

Denys saw, but could not smile. The inn reminded him too much of Gerard.

Ere the night closed the wind changed. She looked into the room and beckoned him with her finger. He rose sulkily, and his guards with him.

'Nay, I would speak a word to thee in private.' She drew him to a corner of the room, and there asked him under her breath, would he do her a kindness.

He answered out loud, 'No, he would not; he was not in the vein to do kindnesses to man or woman. If he did a kindness it should be to a dog; and not that if he could help it.'

'Alas, good archer, I did you one eftsoons, — you and your pretty comrade,' said Manon, humbly.

'You did, dame, you did! Well, then, for his sake — What is 't to do?'

'Thou knowest my story. I had been unfortunate. Now I am worshipful. But a woman did cast him in my teeth this day. And so 't will be ever while he hangs there. I would have him ta'en down; well-a-day!'

'With all my heart.'

'And none dare I ask but thee. Wilt do 't?'

'Not I, even were I not a prisoner.'

On this stern refusal the tender Manon sighed,

and clasped her palms together despondently. Denys told her she need not fret. There were soldiers of a lower stamp who would not make two bites of such a cherry. It was a mere matter of money; if she could find two angels, he would find two soldiers to do the dirty work of the White Hart.

This was not very palatable. However, reflecting that soldiers were birds of passage, drinking here to-night, knocked on the head there to-morrow, she said softly, 'Send them out to me. But prithee, tell them that 't is for one that is my friend. Let them not think 't is for me. I should sink into th' earth; times are changed.'

Denys found warriors glad to win an angel apiece so easily. He sent them out, and instantly dismissing the subject with contempt, sat brooding on his lost friend.

Manon and the warriors soon came to a general understanding. But what were they to do with the body when taken down? She murmured, 'The river is nigh the — the — place.'

'Fling him in, eh?'

'Nay, nay; be not so cruel! Could ye not put him — gently — in — with somewhat weighty?'

She must have been thinking on the subject

in detail; for she was not one to whom ideas came quickly.

All was speedily agreed, except the time of payment. The mail-clad itched for it, and sought it in advance. Manon demurred to that.

What! did she doubt their word? Then let her come along with them, or watch them at a distance.

'Me?' said Manon, with horror. 'I would liever die than see it done.'

'Which yet you would have done.'

'Ay, for sore is my need. Times are changed.' She had already forgotten her precept to Denys.

An hour later the disagreeable relic of caterpillar existence ceased to canker the worshipful matron's public life, and the grim eyes of the past to cast malignant glances down into a white hind's clover field.

Total. She made the landlord an average wife, and a prime house-dog, and outlived everybody.

Her troops, when they returned from executing with mediæval naïveté the precept 'Off wi' the auld love,' received a shock. They found the market-place black with groups; it had been

empty an hour ago. Conscience smote them. This came of meddling with the dead. However, the bolder of the two, encouraged by the darkness, stole forward alone, and slyly mingled with a group. He soon returned to his companion, saying, in a tone of reproach not strictly reasonable, —

'Ye born fool, it is only a miracle.'

CHAPTER XIX.

LETTERS of fire on the church-wall had just inquired, with an appearance of genuine curiosity, why there was no mass for the duke in this time of trouble. The supernatural expostulation had been seen by many, and had gradually faded, leaving the spectators glued there gaping. The upshot was, that the corporation, not choosing to be behind the angelic powers in loyalty to a temporal sovereign, invested freely in masses. By this an old friend of ours, the curé, profited in hard cash; for which he had a very pretty taste. But for this I would not of course have detained you over so trite an occurrence as a miracle.

Denys begged for his arms: 'Why disgrace him as well as break his heart?'

'Then swear on the cross of thy sword not to leave the Bastard's service until the sedition shall be put down.' He yielded to necessity, and delivered three volleys of oaths, and recovered his arms and liberty.

The troops halted at The Three Fish, and Marion at sight of him cried out, 'I 'm out of luck! Who would have thought to see you again?' Then seeing he was sad, and rather hurt than amused at this blunt jest, she asked him what was amiss? He told her. She took a bright view of the case. Gerard was too handsome and well-behaved to come to harm. The women too would always be on his side. Moreover, it was clear that things must either go well or ill with him. In the former case he would strike in with some good company going to Rome; in the latter, he would return home, — perhaps be there before his friend; 'for you have a trifle of fighting to do in Flanders by all accounts.' She then brought him his gold pieces, and steadily refused to accept one, though he urged her again and again. Denys was somewhat convinced by her argument, because she concurred with his own wishes, and was also cheered a little by finding her so honest. It made him think a little better of that world in which his poor little friend was walking alone.

Foot-soldiers in small bodies down to twos and threes were already on the road, making lazily toward Flanders, many of them penniless, but passed from town to town by the bailiffs,

with orders for food and lodging on the inn-keepers.

Anthony of Burgundy overtook numbers of these, and gathered them under his standard, so that he entered Flanders at the head of six hundred men. On crossing the frontier he was met by his brother Baldwyn, with men, arms, and provisions; he organized his whole force and marched on in battle array through several towns, not only without impediment, but with great acclamations. This loyalty called forth comments not altogether gracious.

'This rebellion of ours is a bite,' growled a soldier called Simon, who had elected himself Denys's comrade.

Denys said nothing, but made a little vow to Saint Mars to shoot this Anthony of Burgundy dead, should the rebellion that had cost him Gerard prove no rebellion.

That afternoon they came in sight of a strongly fortified town; and a whisper went through the little army that this was a disaffected place. But when they came in sight, the great gate stood open, and the towers that flanked it on each side were manned with a single sentinel apiece. So the advancing force somewhat broke their array and marched carelessly.

When they were within a furlong, the draw-

bridge across the moat rose slowly and creaking till it stood vertical against the fort, and the very moment it settled into this warlike attitude, down rattled the portcullis at the gate, and the towers and curtains bristled with lances and crossbows.

A stern hum ran through the Bastard's front rank and spread to the rear.

'Halt!' cried he. The word went down the line, and they halted. 'Herald to the gate!' A pursuivant spurred out of the ranks, and halting twenty yards from the gate, raised his bugle with his herald's flag hanging down round it, and blew a summons. A tall figure in brazen armour appeared over the gate. A few fiery words passed between him and the herald, which were not audible, but their import clear, for the herald blew a single keen and threatening note at the walls, and came galloping back with war in his face. The Bastard moved out of the line to meet him, and their heads had not been together two seconds ere he turned in his saddle and shouted, 'Pioneers, to the van!' and in a moment hedges were levelled, and the force took the field and encamped just out of shot from the walls; and away went mounted officers flying south, east, and west, to the friendly towns, for catapults, palisades, mantelets, raw

hides, tar-barrels, carpenters, provisions, and all the materials for a siege.

The bright perspective mightily cheered one drooping soldier. At the first clang of the portcullis his eyes brightened and his temple flushed; and when the herald came back with battle in his eye he saw it in a moment, and for the first time this many days cried, 'Courage, tout le monde, le diable est mort!'

If that great warrior heard, how he must have grinned!

CHAPTER XX.

THE besiegers encamped a furlong from the walls, and made roads; kept their pikemen in camp ready for an assault when practicable; and sent forward their sappers, pioneers, catapultiers, and crossbow-men. These opened a siege by filling the moat, and mining, or breaching the wall, etc. And as much of their work had to be done under close fire of arrows, quarrels, bolts, stones, and little rocks, the above artists 'had need of a hundred eyes,' and acted in concert with a vigilance, and an amount of individual intelligence, daring, and skill, that made a siege very interesting, and even amusing, to lookers-on.

The first thing they did was to advance their carpenters behind rolling mantelets, to erect a stockade high and strong on the very edge of the moat. Some lives were lost at this, but not many; for a strong force of crossbow-men, including Denys, rolled their mantelets up and shot over the workmen's heads at every besieged

who showed his nose, and at every loophole, arrow-slit, or other aperture which commanded the particular spot the carpenters happened to be upon. Covered by their condensed fire, these soon raised a high palisade between them and the ordinary missiles from the pierced masonry.

But the besieged expected this, and ran out at night their hoards or wooden penthouses, on the top of the curtains. The curtains were built with square holes near the top to receive the beams that supported these structures, — the true defence of mediæval forts, from which the besieged delivered their missiles with far more freedom and variety of range than they could shoot through the oblique but immovable loopholes of the curtain, or even through the sloping crenelets of the higher towers. On this the besiegers brought up mangonels, and set them hurling huge stones at these wood-works and battering them to pieces. Contemporaneously they built a triangular wooden tower as high as the curtain, and kept it ready for use, and just out of shot.

This was a terrible sight to the besieged. These wooden towers had taken many a town. They began to mine underneath that part of the moat the tower stood frowning at, and made

other preparations to give it a warm reception. The besiegers also mined, but at another part, — their object being to get under the square barbican and throw it down. All this time Denys was behind his mantelet with another arbalister, protecting the workmen and making some excellent shots. These ended by earning him the esteem of an unseen archer, who every now and then sent a winged compliment quivering into his mantelet. One came and stuck within an inch of the narrow slit through which Denys was squinting at the moment. 'Peste!' cried he, 'you shoot well, my friend. Come forth and receive my congratulations! Shall merit such as thine hide its head? Comrade, it is one of those cursed Englishmen, with his half-ell shaft. I'll not die till I've had a shot at London wall.'

On the besieged's side was a figure that soon attracted great notice by promenading under fire. It was a tall knight, clad in complete brass, and carrying a light but prodigiously long lance with which he directed the movements of the besieged. And when any disaster befell the besiegers, this long knight and his tall lance were pretty sure to be concerned in it.

My young reader will say, 'Why did not Denys shoot him?'

Denys did shoot him, every day of his life; other arbalisters shot him; archers shot him. Everybody shot him. He was there to be shot, apparently. But the abomination was, he did not mind being shot. Nay, worse; he got at last so demoralized as not to seem to know when he was shot. He walked his battlements under fire, as some stout skipper paces his deck in a suit of Flushing, calmly oblivious of the April drops that fall on his woollen armour. At last the besiegers got spiteful, and would not waste any more good steel on him; but cursed him and his impervious coat-of-mail. He took these missiles like the rest.

Gunpowder has spoiled war. War was always detrimental to the solid interests of mankind. But in old times it was good for something: it painted well, sang divinely, furnished Iliads. But invisible butchery, under a pall of smoke a furlong thick, who is any the better for that? Poet with his note-book may repeat, 'Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri;' but the sentiment is hollow and savors of cuckoo. You can't *tueri* anything but a horrid row. He didn't say, 'Suave etiam ingentem caliginem tueri per campos instructam.'

They managed better in the middle ages.

This siege was a small affair; but, such as it was, a writer or minstrel could see it, and turn an honest penny by singing it. So far, then, the sport was reasonable, and served an end.

It was a bright day, clear, but not quite frosty. The efforts of the besieging force were concentrated against a space of about two hundred and fifty yards, containing two curtains, and two towers, one of which was the square barbican, the other had a pointed roof that was built to overlap, resting on a stone machicolade; and by this means a row of dangerous crenelets between the roof and the masonry grinned down at the nearer assailants, and looked not very unlike the grinders of a modern frigate with each port nearly closed. The curtains were overlapped with penthouses, somewhat shattered by the mangonels, trébuchets, and other slinging engines of the besiegers. On the besiegers' edge of the moat was what seemed at first sight a gigantic arsenal, longer than it was broad, peopled by human ants, and full of busy, honest industry, and displaying all the various mechanical science of the age in full operation. — here the lever at work, there the winch and pulley, here the balance, there the capstan. Everywhere heaps of stones and piles of fascines,

mantelets, and rows of fire-barrels; mantelets rolling, the hammer tapping all day, horses and carts in endless succession rattling up with materials. Only, on looking closer into the hive of industry, you might observe that arrows were constantly flying to and fro; that the cranes did not tenderly deposit their masses of stone, but flung them with an indifference to property, though on scientific principles; and that among the tubs full of arrows, and the tar-barrels and the beams, the fagots, and other utensils, here and there a workman or a soldier lay flatter than is usual in so limited naps, and something more or less feathered stuck in them, and blood, and other essentials, oozed out.

At the edge of the moat opposite the wooden tower, a strong penthouse which they called 'a cat' might be seen stealing toward the curtain, and gradually filling up the moat with fascines and rubbish, which the workmen flung out at its mouth. It was advanced by two sets of ropes passing round pulleys, and each worked by a windlass at some distance from the cat. The knight burned the first cat by flinging blazing tar-barrels on it; so the besiegers made the roof of this one very steep, and covered it with raw hides, and the tar-barrels could not harm it.

Then the knight made signs with his spear, and a little trébuchet behind the walls began dropping stones just clear of the wall into the moat, and at last they got the range, and a stone went clean through the roof of the cat, and made an ugly hole.

Baldwyn of Burgundy saw this, and losing his temper, ordered the great catapult that was battering the wood-work of the curtain opposite it to be turned and levelled slantwise at this invulnerable knight.

Denys and his Englishman went to dinner. These two worthies being eternally on the watch for each other had made a sort of distant acquaintance, and conversed by signs, especially on a topic that in peace or war maintains the same importance. Sometimes Denys would put a piece of bread on the top of his mantelet, and then the archer would hang something of the kind out by a string; or the order of invitation would be reversed. Anyway they always managed to dine together.

And now the engineers proceeded to the unusual step of slinging fifty-pound stones at an individual.[1] This catapult was a scientific, simple, and beautiful engine, and very effec-

[1] Type of the English press combining to cannonade a single author.

tive in [illegible] period.

Imagine a fir-tree [illegible] round a [illegible] not in equilibrium [illegible] ing on the other side. At the [illegible] thicker end of the tree was [illegible] of half a ton. This butt-end [illegible] discharge pointed toward the enemy. By means of a powerful winch the long [illegible] of the tree was forced down to the [illegible] and fastened by a bolt, and the stone [illegible] a sling attached to the tree's nose. But this process of course raised the butt-end with its huge weight high in the air, and kept it there struggling in vain to come down. The bolt was now drawn. Gravity, an institution which flourished even then, resumed its sway; the short end swung furiously down, the long end went as furiously round up, and at its highest elevation flung the huge stone out of the sling with a tremendous jerk.

In this case the huge mass so flung missed the knight, but came down near him on the penthouse, and went through it like paper, making an awful gap in roof and floor. Through the latter fell out two inanimate objects, — the stone itself and the mangled body of a besieged

it had struck. They fell down the high curtain side, down, down, and struck almost together the sullen waters of the moat, which closed bubbling on them, and kept both the stone and the bone two hundred years, till cannon mocked those oft perturbed waters, and civilization dried them.

'Aha! a good shot,' cried Baldwyn of Burgundy.

The tall knight retired. The besiegers hooted him. He reappeared on the platform of the barbican, his helmet being just visible above the parapet. He seemed very busy, and soon an enormous Turkish catapult made its appearance on the platform, and aided by the elevation at which it was planted, flung a twenty-pound stone two hundred and forty yards in the air; it bounded after that, and knocked some dirt into the Lord Anthony's eye, and made him swear. The next stone struck a horse that was bringing up a sheaf of arrows in a cart, bowled the horse over dead like a rabbit, and spilt the cart. It was then turned at the besiegers' wooden tower, supposed to be out of shot. Sir Turk slung stones cut with sharp edges on purpose, and struck it repeatedly, and broke it in several places. The besiegers turned two of their slinging engines on this monster, and kept

constantly slinging smaller stones on to the platform of the barbican, and killed two of the engineers. But the Turk disdained to retort. He flung a forty-pound stone on to the besiegers' great catapult, and hitting it in the neighbourhood of the axis, knocked the whole structure to pieces, and sent the engineers skipping and yelling.

In the afternoon, as Simon was running back to his mantelet from a palisade where he had been shooting at the besieged, Denys, peeping through his slit, saw the poor fellow suddenly stare and hold out his arms, then roll on his face, and a feathered arrow protruded from his back. The archer showed himself a moment to enjoy his skill. It was the Englishman. Denys, already prepared, shot his bolt; and the murderous archer staggered away wounded. But poor Simon never moved. His wars were over.

'I am unlucky in my comrades,' said Denys.

The next morning an unwelcome sight greeted the besieged. The cat was covered with mattresses and raw hides, and fast filling up the moat. The knight stoned it, but in vain; flung burning tar-barrels on it, but in vain. Then with his own hands he let down by a rope a bag of burning sulphur and pitch, and stunk

them out. But Baldwyn, armed like a lobster, ran, and bounding on the roof, cut the string, and the work went on. Then the knight sent fresh engineers into the mine, and undermined the place and underpinned it with beams, and covered the beams thickly with grease and tar.

At break of day the moat was filled, and the wooden tower began to move on its wheels toward a part of the curtain on which two catapults were already playing to breach the hoards and clear the way. There was something awful and magical in its approach without visible agency; for it was driven by internal rollers worked by leverage. On the top was a platform, where stood the first assailing party, protected in front by the drawbridge of the turret, which stood vertical till lowered on to the wall; but better protected by full suits of armour. The besieged slung at the tower, and struck it often, but in vain. It was well defended with mattresses and hides, and presently was at the edge of the moat. The knight bade fire the mine underneath it.

Then the Turkish engine flung a stone of half a hundredweight right among the knights, and carried two away with it off the tower on to the plain. One lay and writhed: the other neither moved nor spake.

And now the besieging catapults flung blazing tar-barrels, and fired the hoards on both sides; and the assailants ran up the ladders behind the tower, and lowered the drawbridge on to the battered curtain, while the catapults in concert flung tar-barrels and fired the adjoining works to dislodge the defenders. The armed men on the platform sprang on the bridge, led by Baldwyn. The invulnerable knight and his men-at-arms met them, and a fearful combat ensued, in which many a figure was seen to fall headlong down off the narrow bridge. But fresh besiegers kept swarming up behind the tower, and the besieged were driven off the bridge.

Another minute, and the town was taken; but so well had the firing of the mine been timed, that just at this instant the underpinners gave way, and the tower suddenly sank away from the walls, tearing the drawbridge clear, and pouring the soldiers off it against the masonry and on to the dry moat. The besieged uttered a fierce shout, and in a moment surrounded Baldwyn and his fellows; but strange to say, offered them quarter. While a party disarmed and disposed of these, others fired the turret in fifty places with a sort of hand-grenades. At this work, who so busy as the tall knight. He put fire-bags on his long spear and thrust them into

the doomed structure late so terrible. To do this he was obliged to stand on a projecting beam of the shattered hoard, holding on by the hand of a pikeman to steady himself. This provoked Denys. He ran out from his mantelet, hoping to escape notice in the confusion, and levelling his crossbow missed the knight clean, but sent his bolt into the brain of the pikeman; and the tall knight fell heavily from the wall, lance and all. Denys gazed wonder-struck; and in that unlucky moment, suddenly he felt his arm hot, then cold, and there was an English arrow skewering it.

This episode was unnoticed in a much greater matter. The knight, his armour glittering in the morning sun, fell headlong, but turning as he neared the water, struck it with a slap that sounded a mile off. None ever thought to see him again. But he fell at the edge of the fascines on which the turret stood all cocked on one side, and his spear stuck into them under water, and by a mighty effort he got to the side, but could not get out. Anthony sent a dozen knights with a white flag to take him prisoner. He submitted like a lamb, but said nothing. He was taken to Anthony's tent. That worthy laughed at first at the sight of his muddy armour. But presently, frowning, said, 'I marvel, sir,

that so good a knight as you should know his devoir so ill as turn rebel, and give us all this trouble.'

'I am nun-nun-nun-nun-nun–no knight.'

'What, then?'

'A hosier.'

'A what? Then thy armour shall be stripped off, and thou shalt be tied to a stake in front of the works, and riddled with arrows for a warning to traitors.'

'N-n-n-n–no! duda-duda-duda-duda–don't do that.'

'Why not?'

'Tuta-tuta-tuta–townsfolk will h-h-h–hang t'other buba-buba-buba-buba–bastard.'

'What! Whom?'

'Your bub-bub-bub–brother Baldwyn.'

'What! have yon knaves ta'en him?'

The warlike hosier nodded.

'Hang the fool!' said Anthony, peevishly.

The warlike hosier watched his eye, and doffing his helmet, took out of the lining an intercepted letter from the duke, bidding the said Anthony come to Court immediately, as he was to represent the Court of Burgundy at the Court of England; was to go over and receive the English king's sister and conduct her to her bridegroom the Earl of Charolois. The mission

was one very soothing to Anthony's pride, and also to his love of pleasure; for Edward the Fourth held the gayest and most luxurious court in Europe.

The sly hosier saw he longed to be off, and said, 'We 'll gega-gega-gega-gega–give ye a thousand angels to raise the siege.'

'And Baldwyn?'

'I 'll gega-gega-gega-gega–go and send him with the money.'

It was now dinner-time; and a flag of truce being hoisted on both sides, the sham knight and the true one dined together, and came to a friendly understanding.

'But what is your grievance, my good friend?'

'Tuta-tuta-tuta-tuta–too much taxes.'

Denys on finding the arrow in his right arm, turned his back, which was protected by a long shield, and walked sulkily into camp. He was met by the Count de Jarnac, who had seen his brilliant shot, and finding him wounded into the bargain, gave him a handful of broad pieces.

'Hast got the better of thy grief, arbalister, methinks.'

'My grief, yes; but not my love. As soon

as ever I have put down [illegible]
Holland [illegible]

This event was [illegible]
He was relieved [illegible]
though his wound was [illegible]
stout heart to [illegible]

CHAPTER XXI.

'WHAT makes you here?' was Catherine's greeting.

'I came to seek after Margaret.'

'Well, we know no such person.'

'Say not so, dame; sure you know her by name, — Margaret Brandt.'

'We have heard of her for that matter, — to our cost.'

'Come, dame, prithee tell me at least where she bides.'

'I know not where she bides, and care not.'

Denys felt sure this was a deliberate untruth. He bit his lip. 'Well, I looked to find myself in an enemy's country at this Tergou; but maybe if ye knew all ye would not be so dour.'

'I do know all,' replied Catherine, bitterly. 'This morn I knew nought.' Then suddenly setting her arms akimbo she told him with a raised voice and flashing eyes she wondered at his cheek sitting down by that hearth of all hearths in the world.

'May Satan fly away with your hearth to the lake of fire and brimstone,' shouted Denys, who could speak Flemish fluently. 'Your own servant bade me sit there till you came, else I had ne'er troubled your hearth. My malison on it, and on the churlish roof-tree that greets an unoffending stranger this way;' and he strode scowling to the door.

'Oh! oh!' ejaculated Catherine, frightened, and also a little conscience-stricken; and the virago sat suddenly down and burst into tears. Her daughter followed suit quietly, but without loss of time.

A shrewd writer, now unhappily lost to us, has somewhere the following dialogue: —

She. 'I feel all a woman's weakness.'

He. 'Then you are invincible.'

Denys, by anticipation, confirmed that valuable statement. He stood at the door looking ruefully at the havoc his thunderbolt of eloquence had made.

'Nay, wife,' said he, 'weep not neither for a soldier's hasty word. I mean not all I said. Why, your house is your own, and what right in it have I? There now, I 'll go.'

'What is to do?' said a grave manly voice. It was Eli; he had come in from the shop.

'Here is a ruffian been a-scolding of your

women-folk and making them cry,' explained Denys.

'Little Kate, what is 't?—for ruffians do not use to call themselves ruffians,' said Eli the sensible.

Ere she could explain, 'Hold your tongue, girl,' said Catherine. 'Muriel bade him sat down, and I knew not that, and wyted on him; and he was going and leaving his malison on us, root and branch. I was never so becursed in all my days, oh! oh! oh!'

'You were both somewhat to blame,—both you and he,' said Eli, calmly. 'However, what the servant says the master should still stand to. We keep not open house, but yet we are not poor enough to grudge a seat at our hearth in a cold day to a wayfarer with an honest face, and, as I think, a wounded man. So, end all malice, and sit ye down!'

'Wounded?' cried mother and daughter in a breath.

'Think you a soldier slings his arm for sport?'

'Nay, 't is but an arrow,' said Denys, cheerfully.

'But an arrow!' said Kate, with concentrated horror. 'Where were our eyes, mother?'

'Nay, in good sooth, a trifle. Which, however,

I will pray mesdames to accept as an excuse for my vivacity. 'T is these little, foolish, trifling wounds that fret a man, worthy sir. Why, look ye now, sweeter temper than our Gerard never breathed; yet when the bear did but strike a piece no bigger than a crown out of his calf, he turned so hot and choleric y had said he was no son of yours, but got by the good knight Sir John Pepper on his wife Dame Mustard. — Who is this? A dwarf? Your servant, master Giles.'

'Your servant, soldier,' roared the new comer. Denys started. He had not counted on exchanging greetings with a petard.

Denys's words had surprised his hosts, but hardly more than their deportment now did him. They all three came creeping up to where he sat, and looked down into him with their lips parted, as if he had been some strange phenomenon. And growing agitation succeeded to amazement.

'Now hush!' said Eli, 'let none speak but I. Young man,' said he, solemnly, 'in God's name who are you, that know us though we know you not, and that shake our hearts speaking to us of — the absent — our poor rebellious son, whom Heaven forgive and bless?'

'What, master,' said Denys, lowering his

voice, 'hath he not writ to you? Hath he not told you of me, — Denys of Burgundy?'

'He hath writ but three lines, and named not Denys of Burgundy, nor any stranger.'

'Ay; I mind the long letter was to his sweetheart, — this Margaret, — and she has decamped, plague take her! and how I am to find her Heaven knows.'

'What! she is not your sweetheart, then?'

'Who, dame, an 't please you?'

'Why, Margaret Brandt.'

'How can my comrade's sweetheart be mine? I know her not from Noah's niece. How should I? I never saw her.'

'Whist with this idle chat, Kate,' said Eli, impatiently, 'and let the young man answer me. How came you to know Gerard, our son? Prithee now think on a parent's cares, and answer me straightforward, like a soldier as thou art.'

'And shall. I was paid off at Flushing, and started for Burgundy. On the German frontier I lay at the same inn with Gerard. I fancied him. I said "Be my comrade." He was loath at first: consented presently. Many a weary league we trod together. Never were truer comrades: never will be while earth shall last. First I left my route a bit to be with him; then

he his to be with me. We talked of Sevenbergen and Tergou a thousand times, and of all in this house. We had our troubles on the road, but battling them together made them light. I saved his life from a bear; he mine in the Rhine, — for he swims like a duck and I like a hod o' bricks; and each other's lives at an inn in Burgundy, where we two held a room for a good hour against seven cutthroats, and crippled one and slew two; and your son did his devoir like a man, and met the stoutest champion I ever countered, and spitted him like a sucking-pig. Else I had not been here. But just when all was fair, and I was to see him safe aboard ship for Rome, if not to Rome itself, met us that son of a —— the Lord Anthony of Burgundy, and his men, making for Flanders, then in insurrection, tore us by force apart, took me where I got some broad pieces in hand, and a broad arrow in my shoulder, and left my poor Gerard lonesome. At that sad parting, soldier though I be, these eyes did rain salt scalding tears, and so did his, poor soul. His last word to me was, "Go comfort Margaret!" so here I be. Mine to him was, "Think no more of Rome. Make for Rhine, and down stream home." Now say, for you know best, did I advise him well or ill?'

'Soldier, take my hand,' said Eli. 'God

he his to be with me. We talked of Sevenbergen and Tergou a thousand times, and of all in this house. We had our troubles on the road, but battling them together made them light. I saved his life from a bear; he mine in the Rhine, — for he swims like a duck and I like a hod o' bricks; and each other's lives at an inn in Burgundy, where we two held a room for a good hour against seven cutthroats, and crippled one and slew two; and your son did his devoir like a man, and met the stoutest champion I ever countered, and spitted him like a sucking-pig. Else I had not been here. But just when all was fair, and I was to see him safe aboard ship for Rome, if not to Rome itself, met us that son of a —— the Lord Anthony of Burgundy, and his men, making for Flanders, then in insurrection, tore us by force apart, took me where I got some broad pieces in hand, and a broad arrow in my shoulder, and left my poor Gerard lonesome. At that sad parting, soldier though I be, these eyes did rain salt scalding tears, and so did his, poor soul. His last word to me was, "Go comfort Margaret!" so here I be. Mine to him was, "Think no more of Rome. Make for Rhine, and down stream home." Now say, for you know best, did I advise him well or ill?'

'Soldier, take my hand,' said Eli. 'God

bless thee! God bless thee!' and his lip quivered. It was all his reply, but more eloquent than many words.

Catherine did not answer at all; but she darted from the room and bade Muriel bring the best that was in the house, and returned with wood in both arms, and heaped the fire, and took out a snow-white cloth from the press, and was going in a great hurry to lay it for Gerard's friend, when suddenly she sat down, and all the power ebbed rapidly out of her body.

'Father!' cried Kate, whose eye was as quick as her affection. Denys started up; but Eli waved him back, and flung a little water sharply in his wife's face. This did her instant good. She gasped, 'So sudden. My poor boy!' Eli whispered Denys, 'Take no notice! She thinks of him night and day.' They pretended not to observe her, and she shook it off, and bustled and laid the cloth with her own hands; but as she smoothed it, her hands trembled, and a tear or two stole down her cheeks.

They could not make enough of Denys. They stuffed him, and crammed him, and then gathered round him and kept filling his glass in turn, while by that genial blaze of fire and ruby wine and eager eyes he told all that I have re-

lated, and a vast number of minor details, which an artist, however minute, omits.

But how different the effect on my readers and on this small circle! To them the interest was already made before the first word came from his lips. It was all about Gerard; and he who sat there telling it them was warm from Gerard, and an actor with him in all these scenes.

The flesh and blood around that fire quivered for their severed member, hearing its struggles and perils.

I shall ask my readers to recall to memory all they can of Gerard's journey with Denys, and in their mind's eye to see those very matters told by his comrade to an exile's father, all stoic outside, all father within, and to two poor women, — an exile's mother and a sister, — who were all love and pity and tender anxiety both outside and in. Now, would you mind closing this book for a minute and making an effort to realize all this? It will save us so much repetition.

Then you will not be surprised when I tell you that after a while Giles came softly and curled himself up before the fire, and lay gazing at the speaker with a reverence almost canine; and that, when the rough soldier had unconsciously but thoroughly betrayed his better

qualities, and above all his rare affection for Gerard, Kate, though timorous as a bird, stole her little hand into the warrior's huge brown palm, where it lay an instant like a teaspoonful of cream spilt on a platter, then nipped the ball of his thumb and served for a Kardiometer. In other words, Fate is just even to rival story-tellers, and balances matters. Denys had to pay a tax to his audience which I have not. Whenever Gerard was in too much danger, the women's faces became so white, and their poor little throats gurgled so, he was obliged in common humanity to spoil his recital. Suspense is the soul of narrative, and thus dealt Rough-and-Tender of Burgundy with his best suspenses. 'Now, dame, take not on till ye hear the end. Ma'amselle, let not your cheek blanch so. Courage! It looks ugly; but you shall hear how we wond through. Had he miscarried, and I at hand, would I be alive?'

And I called Kate's little hand a Kardiometer, or heart-measurer, because it graduated emotion, and pinched by scale. At its best it was by no means a high-pressure engine; but all is relative. Denys soon learned the tender gamut, and when to water the suspense, and extract the thrill as far as possible. On one occasion only he cannily indemnified his nar-

rative for this drawback. Falling personally into the Rhine, and sinking, he got pinched, — he, Denys, to his surprise and satisfaction. 'Oho!' thought he; and on the principle of the anatomists, *experimentum in corpore vili*, kept himself a quarter of an hour under water, under pressure all the time. And even when Gerard had got hold of him, he was loath to leave the river, so, less conscientious than I was, swam with Gerard to the east bank first, and was about to land, but detected the officers and their intent, chaffed them a little space, treading water, then turned and swam wearily all across, and at last was obliged to get out, for very shame, or else acknowledge himself a pike; so permitted himself to land, exhausted, and the pressure relaxed.

It was eleven o'clock, — an unheard of hour, but they took no note of time this night; and Denys had still much to tell them, when the door was opened quietly, and in stole Cornelis and Sybrandt looking hang-dog. They had this night been drinking the very last drop of their mysterious funds.

Catherine feared her husband would rebuke them before Denys; but he only looked sadly at them, and motioned them to sit down quietly.

Denys it was who seemed discomposed. He knitted his brows and eyed them thoughtfully and rather gloomily, then turned to Catherine. 'What say you, dame? The rest to-morrow? — for I am somewhat weary, and it waxes late.'

'So be it,' said Eli.

But when Denys rose to go to his inn, he was instantly stopped by Catherine. 'And think you to lie from this house? Gerard's room has been got ready for you hours agone. The sheets I 'll not say much for, seeing I spun the flax and wove the web.'

'Then would I lie in them blindfold,' was the gallant reply. 'Ah, dame, our poor Gerard was the one for fine linen. He could hardly forgive the honest Germans their coarse flax; and whene'er my traitors of countrymen did amiss, a would excuse them, saying, "Well, well; bonnes toiles sont en Bourgogne," — that means, "There be good lenten cloths in Burgundy." But indeed he beat all for by-words and cleanliness.'

'Oh, Eli! Eli! doth not our son come back to us at each word?'

'Ay. Buss me, my poor Kate. You and I know all that passeth in each other's hearts this night. None other can, but God.'

sitting in a richly furnished room, and opened her business.

The tapestry dropped out of Margaret Van Eyck's hands. 'Gone? Gone from Seventhwaite and not told me? The thankless girl!'

This turn greatly surprised the visitor. 'What! you knew not? When was she here last?'

'Maybe ten days agone. I had ta'en out my brushes, after so many years, to paint her portrait. I did not do it though [illegible]

Catherine remarked it was 'a most strange thing she should go away bag and baggage like this, without with your leave or by your [illegible] why, or wherefore. Was ever aught [illegible] toward; just when all our hearts are [illegible] her. And here is Gerard's mate come to [illegible] ends o' the earth with comfort for [illegible] rard, and can't find her, and [illegible] pected. What to do I know [illegible] she is not parted like this without [illegible] Can ye not give us the [illegible] selle? Prithee now.'

'I have it not to give [illegible] rather peevishly.

'Then I can. [illegible] herself in the [illegible] heightened

Catherine had never felt so kindly toward the truant Margaret as now; and she was fully as anxious to find her, and be kind to her before Gerard's return as Denys was: but she could not agree with him that anything was to be gained by leaving this neighbourhood to search for her. 'She must have told somebody whither she was going. It is not as though they were dishonest folk flying the country: they owe not a stiver in Sevenbergen. And, dear heart, Denys, you can't hunt all Holland for her.'

'Can I not?' said Denys, grimly. 'That we shall see.' He added, after some reflection, that they must divide their forces: she stay here with eyes and ears wide open, and he ransack every town in Holland for her, if need be. 'But she will not be many leagues from here. They be three. Three fly not so fast, nor far, as one.'

'That is sense,' said Catherine. But she insisted on his going first to the Demoiselle Van Eyck. 'She and our Margaret were bosom friends. She knows where the girl is gone, if she will but tell us.' Denys was for going to her that instant; so Catherine, in a turn of the hand, made herself one shade neater, and took him with her.

She was received graciously by the old lady,

sitting in a richly furnished room, and opened her business.

The tapestry dropped out of Margaret Van Eyck's hands. 'Gone? Gone from Sevenbergen and not told me? The thankless girl!'

This turn greatly surprised the visitors. 'What! you knew not? When was she here last?'

'Maybe ten days agone. I had ta'en out my brushes, after so many years, to paint her portrait. I did not do it though — for reasons.'

Catherine remarked it was 'a most strange thing she should go away bag and baggage like this, without with your leave or by your leave, why, or wherefore. Was ever aught so untoward; just when all our hearts are warm to her. And here is Gerard's mate come from the ends o' the earth with comfort for her from Gerard, and can't find her, and Gerard himself expected. What to do I know not. But sure she is not parted like this without a reason. Can ye not give us the clew, my good demoiselle? Prithee now.'

'I have it not to give,' said the elder lady, rather peevishly.

'Then I can,' said Reicht Heynes, showing herself in the doorway, with colour somewhat heightened.

'So you have been hearkening all the time, eh?'

'What are my ears for, mistress?'

'True. Well, throw us the light of thy wisdom on this dark matter.'

'There is no darkness that I see,' said Reicht. 'And the clew, why an ye call 't a two-plye twine, and the ends on 't in this room e'en now, ye 'll not be far out. Oh, mistress, I wonder at you sitting there pretending.'

'Marry, come up!' and the mistress's cheek was now nearly as red as the servant's. 'So 't was I drove the foolish girl away.'

'You did your share, mistress. What sort of greeting gave you her last time she came? Think you she could miss to notice it, and she all friendless? And you said, "I have altered my mind about painting of you," says you, a-turning up your nose at her.'

'I did not turn up my nose. It is not shaped like yours for looking heavenward.'

'Oh, all our nosen can follow our heartys bent, for that matter. Poor soul. She did come into the kitchen to me. "I am not to be painted now," said she, and the tears in her eyes. She said no more. But I knew well what she did mean. I had seen ye.'

'Well,' said Margaret Van Eyck, 'I do con-

fess so much; and I make you the judge, madam. Know that these young girls can do nothing of their own heads, but are most apt at mimicking aught their sweethearts do. Now, your Gerard is reasonably handy at many things, and among the rest at the illuminator's craft. And Margaret she is his pupil, and a patient one; what marvel? — having a woman's eye for colour, and eke a lover to ape. 'T is a trick I despise at heart; for by it the great art of colour, which should be royal, aspiring, and free, becomes a poor slave to the petty crafts of writing and printing, and is fettered, imprisoned, and made little, body and soul, to match the littleness of books, and go to church in a rich fool's pocket. Natheless, affection rules us all; and when the poor wench would bring me her thorn leaves and lilies and ivy and dewberries and ladybirds and butterfly grubs, and all the scum of Nature, stuck fast in gold-leaf like wasps in a honey-pot, and, withal, her diurnal book, showing she had pored an hundred, or an hundred and fifty, or two hundred hours over each singular page, certes I was wroth that an immortal soul, and many hours of labour, and much manual skill, should be flung away on Nature's trash, — leaves, insects, grubs, — and on barren letters. But having bowels, I

did perforce restrain, and, as it were, dam, my better feelings, and looked kindly at the work to see how it might be bettered; and said I, "Sith Heaven for our sins hath doomed us to spend time and soul and colour on great letters and little beetles, omitting such small fry as saints and heroes, their acts and passions, why not present the scum naturally?" I told her the grapes I saw, walking abroad, did hang i' the air, not stick in a wall. "And even these insects," quo' I, "and Nature her slime in general, pass not their noxious lives wedged miserably in metal prisons like flies in honey-pots and glue-pots, but do crawl or hover at large, infesting air." "Ah, my dear friend," says she, "I see now whither you drive; but this ground is gold, whereon we may not shade." "Who says so?" quoth I. "All teachers of this craft," says she; and (to make an end o' me at once, I trow) "Gerard himself!" "That for Gerard himself," quoth I, "and all the gang. Gi'e me a brush!"

'Then chose I, to shade her fruit and reptiles, a colour false in Nature, but true relatively to that monstrous ground of glaring gold; and in five minutes out came a bunch of raspberries, stalk and all, and a'most flew in your mouth; likewise a butterfly grub she had so truly pre-

sented as might turn the stoutest stomach. My lady she flings her arms round my neck, and says she, "Oh!"'

'Did she now?'

'The little love!' observed Denys, succeeding at last in wedging in a word.

Margaret Van Eyck stared at him, and then smiled. She went on to tell them how from step to step she had been led on to promise to resume the art she had laid aside with a sigh when her brothers died, and to paint the Madonna once more, with Margaret for model. Incidentally she even revealed how girls are turned into saints.

'"Thy hair is adorable," said I. "Why, 't is red," quo' she. "Ay," quoth I, "but what a red! How brown! how glossy! Most hair is not worth a straw to us painters: thine the artist's very hue. But thy violet eyes, which smack of earth, being now languid for lack of one Gerard, now full of fire in hopes of the same Gerard, — these will I lift to heaven in fixed and holy meditation; and thy nose, which doth already somewhat aspire that way (though not so piously as Reicht's), will I debase a trifle, and somewhat enfeeble thy chin."'

'Enfeeble her chin? Alack! what may that mean? Ye go beyond me, mistress.'

'T is a resolute chin. Not a jot too resolute for this wicked world; but when ye come to a Madonna! No, thank you.'

'Well, I never! A resolute chin.'

Denys. 'The darling!'

'And now comes the rub. When you told me she was — the way she is, it gave me a shock. I dropped my brushes. Was I going to turn a girl that could n't keep her lover at a distance into the Virgin Mary, at my time of life? I love the poor ninny still; but I adore our blessed Lady. Say you, "A painter must not be peevish in such matters." Well, most painters are men; and men are fine fellows. They can do aught. Their saints and virgins are neither more nor less than their lemans, saving your presence. But know that for this very reason half their craft is lost on me, which find beneath their angels' white wings the very trollops I have seen flaunting it on the streets, bejewelled like Paynim idols, and put on like the queens in a pack o' cards. And I am not a fine fellow, but only a woman; and my painting is but one half craft and t' other half devotion. So now you may read me. 'T was foolish, maybe, but I could not help it; yet am I sorry.' And the old lady ended despondently a discourse which she had commenced in a mighty defiant tone.

'Well, you know, dame,' observed Catherine, 'you must think it would go to the poor girl's heart, and she so fond of ye.'

Margaret Van Eyck only sighed.

The Frisian girl, after biting her lips impatiently a little while, turned upon Catherine. 'Why, dame, think you 't was for that alone Margaret and Peter hath left Sevenberg? Nay.'

'For what else, then?'

'What else? Why, because Gerard's people slight her so cruel. Who would bide among hard-hearted folk that ha' driven her lad t' Italy, and, now he is gone, relent not, but face it out, and ne'er come anigh her that is left?'

'Reicht, I was going.'

'Oh, ay, going, and going, and going. Ye should ha' said less or else done more. But with your words you did uplift her heart and let it down wi' your deeds. "They have never been," said the poor thing to me, with such a sigh. Ay, here is *one* can feel for her, — for I too am far from my friends; and often when first I came to Holland, I did use to take a hearty cry all to myself. But ten times liever would I be Reicht Heynes, with nought but the leagues atween me and all my kith, than be as she is i' the midst of them that ought to warm to her, and yet to fare as lonesome as I.'

'Alack! Reicht, I did go but yestreen, and had gone before, but one plaguy thing or t' other did still come and hinder me.'

'Mistress, did aught hinder ye to eat your dinner any one of those days? I trow not. And had your heart been as good toward your own flesh and blood as 't was toward your flesher's meat, nought had prevailed to keep you from her that sat lonely, a-watching the road for you and comfort, wi' your child's child a-beating 'neath her bosom.'

Here this rude young woman was interrupted by an incident not uncommon in a domestic's bright existence. The Van Eyck had been nettled by the attack on her, but with due tact had gone into ambush. She now sprang out of it. 'Since you disrespect my guests, seek another place!'

'With all my heart,' said Reicht, stoutly.

'Nay, mistress,' put in the good-natured Catherine. 'True folk will still speak out. Her tongue is a stinger' (here the water came into the speaker's eyes by way of confirmation); 'but better she said it than thought it. So now 't won't rankle in her. And part with her for me, that shall ye not. Beshrew the wench, she kens she is a good servant, and takes advantage. We poor wretches which keep house

must still pay 'em tax for value. I had a good servant once, when I was a young 'oman. Eh dear, how she did grind me down into the dust. In the end, by Heaven's mercy, she married the baker; and I was my own woman again. "So," said I, "no more good servants shall come hither, a-hectoring o' me." I just get a fool and learn her; and whenever she knoweth her right hand from her left, she sauceth me, then out I bundle her neck and crop, and take another dunce in her place. Dear heart, 't is wearisome, teaching a string of fools by ones. But there, I am mistress;' here she forgot that she was defending Reicht, and turning rather spitefully upon her, added, 'and you be mistress here, I trow.'

'No more than that stool,' said the Van Eyck, loftily. 'She is neither mistress nor servant; but Gone. She is dismissed the house, and there 's an end of *her*. What! did ye not hear me turn the saucy baggage off?'

'Ay, ay. We all heard ye,' said Reicht, with vast indifference.

'Then hear me!' said Denys, solemnly.

They all went round like things on wheels, and fastened their eyes on him.

'Ay, let us hear what the man says,' urged the hostess. 'Men are fine fellows, with their great hoarse voices.'

'Mistress Reicht,' said Denys, with great dignity and ceremony, — indeed so great as to verge on the absurd, — 'you are turned off. If on a slight acquaintance I might advise, I 'd say, "Since you are a servant no more, be a mistress, — a queen."'

'Easier said than done,' replied Reicht, bluntly.

'Not a jot. You see here one who is a man, though but half an arbalister, owing to that devilish Englishman's arrow, in whose carcass I have, however, left a like token, which is a comfort. I have twenty gold pieces' (he showed them) 'and a stout arm. In another week or so I shall have twain. Marriage is not a habit of mine, but I capitulate to so many virtues. You are beautiful, good-hearted, and outspoken; and, above all, you take the part of my she-comrade. Be then an arbalistresse!'

'And what the dickens is that?' inquired Reicht.

'I mean, be the wife, mistress, and queen of Denys of Burgundy here present!'

A dead silence fell on all. It did not last long though, and was followed by a burst of unreasonable indignation.

Catherine. 'Well, did you ever?'

Margaret. 'Never in all my born days.'

Catherine. 'Before our very faces.'

Margaret. 'Of all the [illegible] and [illegible] of this [illegible] sex —'

Here Denys [illegible] that the woman to whom he had addressed himself was mute; and the others, on whose [illegible] there was no immediate demand, were [illegible]. On this the voices stopped, and the eyes turned pivot-like upon Reicht.

She took a sly glance from under her lashes at her military assailant, and said, 'I mean to take a good look at any man ere I [illegible] his arms.'

Denys drew himself up majestically. 'Then look your fill, and leap away.'

This proposal led to a new and most unexpected result. A long white finger was extended by the Van Eyck in a line with the speaker's eye, and an agitated voice bade him stand, in the name of all the saints. 'You are beautiful, so,' cried she. 'You are inspired, — with folly. What matters that? — you are inspired. I must take off your head.' And in a moment she was at work with her pencil. 'Come out, hussy,' she screamed to Reicht, 'more in front of him, and keep the fool inspired and beautiful. Oh, why had I not this maniac for my good centurion? They went and brought me a brute with a low forehead and a shapeless beard.'

Catherine stood and looked with utter amazement at this pantomime, and secretly resolved that her venerable hostess had been a disguised lunatic all this time, and was now busy throwing off the mask. As for Reicht, she was unhappy and cross. She had left her caldron in a precarious state, and made no scruple to say so, and that duties so grave as hers left her no 'time to waste a-playing the statee and the fool all at one time.' Her mistress in reply reminded her that it was possible to be rude and rebellious to one's poor, old, affectionate, desolate mistress, without being utterly heartless and savage, and a trampler on arts.

On this Reicht stopped, and pouted, and looked like a little basilisk at the inspired model who caused her woe. He retorted with unshaken admiration.

The situation was at last dissolved by the artist's wrist becoming cramped from disuse; this was not, however, until she had made a rough but noble sketch. 'I can work no more at present,' said she, sorrowfully.

'Then now, mistress, I may go and mind my pot?'

'Ay, ay, go to your pot; and get into it, do! You will find your soul in it; so then you will all be together.'

'Well, but, Reicht,' said Catherine, laughing, 'she turned you off.'

'Boo, boo, boo!' said Reicht, contemptuously. 'When she wants to get rid of me, let her turn herself off and die. I am sure she is old enough for 't. But take your time, mistress; if you are in no hurry, no more am I. When that day doth come, 't will take a man to dry my eyes. And if you should be in the same mind then, soldier, you can say so; and if you are not, why, 't will be all one to Reicht Heynes.'

And the plain speaker went her way. But her words did not fall to the ground. Neither of her women hearers could disguise from herself that this blunt girl, solitary herself, had probably read Margaret Brandt aright, and that she had gone away from Sevenbergen broken hearted.

Catherine and Denys bade the Van Eyck adieu, and that same afternoon Denys set out on a wild-goose chase. His plan, like all great things, was simple. He should go to a hundred towns and villages, and ask in each after an old physician with a fair daughter, and an old longbow soldier. He should inquire of the burgomasters about all new comers, and should go to the fountains and watch the women and girls as

they came with their pitchers for water. And away he went, and was months and months on the tramp and could not find her.

Happily, this chivalrous feat of friendship was in some degree its own reward.

Those who sit at home blindfolded by self-conceit, and think camel or man out of the depths of their inner consciousness, — alias their ignorance, — will tell you that in the intervals of war and danger, peace and tranquil life acquire their true value and satisfy the heroic mind. But those who look before they babble or scribble will see, and say, that men who risk their lives habitually thirst for exciting pleasures between the acts of danger, and not for innocent tranquillity.

To this Denys was no exception. His whole military life had been half Sparta, half Capua; and he was too good a soldier, and too good a libertine, to have ever mixed either habit with the other. But now for the first time he found himself mixed, — at peace and yet on duty; for he took this latter view of his wild-goose chase, luckily. So all these months he was a demi-Spartan, sober, prudent, vigilant, indomitable; and happy, though constantly disappointed, as might have been expected. He flirted gigantically on the road, but wasted no time about it.

Nor in these his wanderings did he tell a single woman that 'marriage was not one of his habits,' etc.

And so we leave him on the tramp, Pilgrim of Friendship, as his poor comrade was of Love.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE good-hearted Catherine was not happy. Not that she reproached herself very deeply for not having gone quickly enough to Sevenbergen, whither she was not bound to go at all, except on the score of having excited false hopes in Margaret ; but she was in dismay when she reflected that Gerard must reach home in another month at farthest, more likely in a week. And how should she tell him she had not even kept an eye upon his betrothed? Then there was the uncertainty as to the girl's fate; and this uncertainty sometimes took a sickening form.

'Oh, Kate,' she groaned, 'if she should have gone and made herself away.'

'Mother, she would never be so wicked.'

'Ah, my lass, you know not what hasty fools young lasses be, that have no mothers to keep 'em straight. They will fling themselves into the water for a man that the next man they meet would ha' cured 'em of in a week. I have known 'em to jump in like brass one moment and scream for help in the next. Could n't know

their own minds, ye see, even about such a trifle as yon. And there's times when their bodies ail like no other living creatures ever I could hear of; and that strings up their feelings so, the patience that belongs to them at other times beyond all living souls, barring an ass, seems all to jump out of 'em at one turn, and into the water they go. Therefore, I say that men are monsters.'

'Mother!'

'Monsters, and no less, to go making such heaps o' canals just to tempt the poor women in. They know we shall not cut our throats, hating the sight of blood, and rating our skins a hantle higher nor our lives; and as for hanging, while she is a-fixing of the nail and a-making of the noose she has time t'alter her mind. But a jump into a canal is no more than into bed; and the water, it does all the lave, will ye, nill ye. Why, look at me, the mother o' nine, was a't I agog to make a hole in our canal for the nonce?'

'Nay, mother, I'll never believe it of you.'

'Ye may, though. 'T was in the first year of our keeping house together. Eli had n't found out my weak stitches then, nor I his; so we made a rent, pulling contrariwise, and had a quarrel. So then I ran crying, to tell some gossiping

fool like myself what I had no business to tell out o' doors except to the saints, and there was one of our precious canals in the way. Do they take us for teal? Oh, how tempting it did look! Says I to myself, "Sith he has let me go out of his door quarrelled, he shall see me drowned next, and then he will change his key. He will blubber a good one, and I shall look down from heaven (I forgot I should be in t' other part) and see him take on, and, oh, but that will be sweet!" And I was all a-tiptoe, and going in, only just then I thought I would not. I had got a new gown a-making, for one thing, and hard upon finished. So I went home instead, and what was Eli's first word? "Let yon flea stick i' the wall, my lass," says he. "Not a word of all I said t' anger thee was sooth, but this: 'I love thee.'" These were his very words; I minded 'em, being the first quarrel. So I flung my arms about his neck and sobbed a bit, and thought o' the canal. And he was no colder to me than I to him, being a man and a young one; and so then that was better than lying in the water, and spoiling my wedding kirtle and my fine new shoon, — old John Bush made 'em, that was uncle to him keeps the shop now. And what was my grief to hers?'

Little Kate hoped that Margaret loved her father too much to think of leaving him so at his age. 'He is father and mother and all to her, you know.'

'Nay, Kate, they do forget all these things in a moment o' despair, when the very sky seems black above them. I place more faith in him that is unborn than on him that is ripe for the grave, to keep her out o' mischief; for certes it do go sore against us to die when there's a little innocent a-pulling at our hearts to let un live, and feeding at our very veins.'

'Well, then, keep up a good heart, mother.' She added, that very likely all these fears were exaggerated. She ended by solemnly entreating her mother at all events not to persist in naming the sex of Margaret's infant. It was so unlucky, all the gossips told her. 'Dear heart, as if there were not as many girls born as boys.'

This reflection, though not unreasonable, was met with clamour.

'Have you the cruelty to threaten me with a girl! I want no more girls while I have you. What use would a lass be to me? Can I be her on my knee and see my Gerard [illegible] can a boy? I tell thee 't is all [illegible]'

'How may that be?'

'In my mind. And if I am to be disappointed i' the end, 't is n't for you to disappoint me beforehand, telling me it is not to be a child, but only a girl.'

All these anxieties, and if I may be permitted, without disrespect to the dead, to add, all this twaddle, that accompanied them, were shortly suspended by an incident that struck nearer home; made Tergou furiously jealous of Catherine, and Catherine weep. And, if my reader is fond of wasting his time, as some novel readers are, he cannot do it more effectually than by guessing what could produce results so incongruous.

Marched up to Eli's door a pageant brave to the eye of sense, and to the vulgar judgment noble, but to the philosophic, pitiable more or less.

It looked one animal, — a centaur; but on severe analysis proved two. The human half was sadly bedizened with those two metals, to clothe his carcass with which and line his pouch man has now and then disposed of his soul. Still, the horse was the vainer brute of the two: he was far worse beflounced, bebonneted, and bemantled, than any fair lady *regnante crinolinâ*. For the man, under the colour of a warming-

pan, retained Nature's outline. But it was *subaudi equum!* Scarce a pennyweight of honest horseflesh to be seen. Our crinoline spares the noble parts of woman, and makes but the baser parts gigantic (why this preference?); but this poor animal from stem to stern was swamped in finery. His ears were hid in great sheaths of white linen tipped with silver and blue; his body swaddled in stiff, gorgeous cloths descending to the ground, except just in front, where they left him room to mince; his tail, though dear to memory no doubt, was lost to sight, being tucked in Heaven knows how. Only his eyes shone out like goggles through two holes pierced in the wall of haberdashery, and his little front hoofs peeped in and out like rats.

Yet did this compound, gorgeous and irrational, represent power, — absolute power. It came straight from a tournament at the duke's court, which being on a progress lay last night at a neighbouring town, to execute the behests of royalty.

'What ho!' cried the upper half, and on Eli emerging, with his wife behind him, saluted them. 'Peace be with you, good people. Rejoice! I am come for your dwarf.'

Eli looked amazed, and said nothing. But Catherine screamed over his shoulder, 'You

have mistook your road, good man. Here abides no dwarf.'

'Nay, wife, he means our Giles, who is somewhat small of stature. Why gainsay what gainsayed may not be?'

'Ay!' cried the pageant, 'that is he, and discourseth like the big tabor.'

'His breast is sound for that matter,' said Catherine, sharply.

'And prompt with his fists though at long odds.'

'Else how would the poor thing keep his head in such a world as this?'

'T is well said, dame. Art as ready with thy weapon as he; art his mother, likely. So bring him forth, and that presently. See, they lead a stunted mule for him. The duke hath need of him,—sore need. We are clean out o' dwarven and tiger-cats, which may not be whiles earth them yieldeth. Our last hop-o'-my-thumb tumbled down the well t' other day.'

'And think you I 'll let my darling go to such an ill-guided house as yon, where the reckless trollops of servants close not the well-mouth, but leave it open to trap innocents like wolven?'

The representative of autocracy lost patience at this unwonted opposition, and with stern look and voice bade her bethink her whether it was

the better of the two, 'To have your abortion at Court, fed like a bishop and put on like a prince, or to have all your heads stricken off and borne on poles, with a bell-man crying, "Behold the heads of hardy rebels, which having by good luck a misbegotten son, did traitorously grudge him to the duke, who is the true father of all his folk, little or mickle"?'

'Nay,' said Eli, sadly, 'miscall us not. We be true folk, and neither rebels nor traitors. But 't is sudden; and the poor lad is our true flesh and blood, and hath of late given proof of more sense than heretofore.'

'Avails not threatening our lives,' whimpered Catherine; 'we grudge him not to the duke. But in sooth he cannot go: his linen is all in holes. So there is an end.'

But the masculine mind resisted this crusher.

'Think you the duke will not find linen, and cloth-of-gold to boot? None so brave, none so affected, at Court, as our monsters, big or wee.'

How long the dispute might have lasted before the iron arguments of despotism achieved the inevitable victory, I know not; but it was cut short by a party whom neither disputant had deigned to consult.

The bone of contention walked out of the house, and sided with monarchy.

'If my folk are mad, I am not,' he roared. 'I 'll go with you, and on the instant.'

At this Catherine set up a piteous cry. She saw another of her brood escaping from under her wing into some unknown element.

Giles was not quite insensible to her distress, so simple yet so eloquent. He said, 'Nay, take not on, mother! Why, 't is a godsend. And I am sick of this ever since Gerard left it.'

'Ah, cruel Giles! Should ye not rather say, she is bereaved of Gerard: the more need of you to stay aside her and comfort her!'

'Oh, I am not going to Rome. Not such a fool. I shall never be farther than Rotterdam; and I 'll often come and see you. And if I like not the place, who shall keep me there? Not all the dukes in Christendom.'

'Good sense lies in little bulk,' said the emissary, approvingly. 'Therefore, Master Giles, buss the old folk, and thank them for misbegetting of thee, and — Ho! you, — bring hither his mule!'

One of his retinue brought up the dwarf mule. Giles refused it with scorn. And on being asked the reason, said it was not just. 'What! would ye throw all into one scale? Put muckle to muckle, and little to wee? Be-

sides, I hate and scorn small things. I 'll go on the highest horse here, or not at all.'

The pursuivant eyed him attentively a moment. He then adopted a courteous manner. 'I shall study your will in all things reasonable. — Dismount, Eric; yours is the highest horse. — And if you would halt in the town an hour or so, while you bid them farewell, say but the word, and your pleasure shall be my delight.'

Giles reflected.

'Master,' said he, 'if we wait a month 't will be still the same; my mother is a good soul, but her body is bigger than her spirit. We shall not part without a tear or two, and the quicker 't is done the fewer; so bring yon horse to me.'

Catherine threw her apron over her face and sobbed. The high horse was brought, and Giles was for swarming up his tail, like a rope; but one of the servants cried out hastily, 'Forbear, for he kicketh.' 'I 'll kick him,' said Giles. 'Bring him close beneath this window, and I 'll learn you all how to mount a horse which kicketh, and will not be clomb by the tail, — the staircase of an horse.' And he dashed into the house and almost immediately reappeared at an upper window with a rope in his

hand. He fastened an end somehow, and holding the other, descended as swift and smooth as an oiled thunderbolt in a groove, and lighted astride his high horse as unperceived by that animal as a fly settling on him.

The official lifted his hands to heaven in mawkish admiration. 'I have gotten a pearl,' thought he; 'and, wow! but this will be a good day's work for me.'

'Come, father! come, mother! buss me, and bless me, and off I go.'

Eli gave him his blessing, and bade him be honest and true, and a credit to his folk. Catherine could not speak, but clung to him with many sobs and embraces; and even through the mist of tears her eye detected in a moment a little rent in his sleeve he had made getting out of window, and she whipped out her needle and mended it then and there; and her tears fell on his arm the while, unheeded, except by those unfleshly eyes with which they say the very air is thronged.

And so the dwarf mounted the high horse, and rode away complacent, with the old hand laying the court butter on his back with a trowel. Little recked Perpusillus of two poor silly women that sat by the bereaved hearth, rocking themselves, and weeping, and discuss-

ing all his virtues, and how his mind had opened lately, and blind as two beetles to his faults, who rode away from them jocund and bold.

'Ingentes animos angusto in pectore versant.'

Arrived at Court he speedily became a great favourite.

One strange propensity of his electrified the palace; but on account of his small size, and for variety's sake, and as a monster, he was indulged in it. In a word, he was let speak the truth. It is an unpopular thing: he made it an intolerable one, — bawled it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARGARET BRANDT had always held herself apart from Sevenbergen; and her reserve had passed for pride. This had come to her ears; and she knew many hearts were swelling with jealousy and malevolence. How would they triumph over her when her condition could no longer be concealed! This thought gnawed her night and day. For some time it had made her bury herself in the house, and shun daylight even on those rare occasions when she went abroad. Not that in her secret heart and conscience she mistook her moral situation, as my unlearned readers have done perhaps. Though not acquainted with the nice distinctions of the contemporary law, she knew that betrothal was a marriage contract, and could no more be legally broken on either side than any other compact written and witnessed; and that marriage with another party than the betrothed had been formally annulled both by Church and State; and that betrothed

couples often came together without any further ceremony, and their children were legitimate. But what weighed down her simple mediæval mind was this: that very contract of betrothal was not forthcoming. Instead of her keeping it, Gerard had got it; and Gerard was far, far away. She hated and despised herself for the miserable oversight which had placed her at the mercy of false opinion. For though she had never heard of Horace's famous couplet *Segnius irritant,* etc., she was Horatian by the plain, hard, positive intelligence, which strange to say characterizes the judgment of her sex when feeling happens not to blind it altogether. She gauged the understanding of the world to a T. Her marriage lines being out of sight, and in Italy, would never prevail to balance her visible pregnancy, and the sight of her child when born. What sort of a tale was this to stop slanderous tongues? 'I have got my marriage lines, but I cannot show them you.' What woman would believe her, or even pretend to believe her? And, as she was in reality one of the most modest girls in Holland, it was women's good opinion she wanted, not men's.

Even barefaced slander attacks her sex at a great advantage; but here was slander with a face of truth. 'The strong-minded woman'

had not yet been invented; and Margaret, though by nature, and by having been early made mistress of a family, she was resolute in some respects, was weak as water in others, and weakest of all in this. Like all the *élite* of her sex she was a poor little leaf trembling at each gust of the world's opinion, true or false. Much misery may be contained in few words. I doubt if pages of description from any man's pen could make any human creature, except virtuous women (and these need no such aid), realize the anguish of a virtuous woman foreseeing herself paraded as a frail one. Had she been frail at heart, she might have brazened it out; but she had not that advantage. She was really pure as snow, and saw the pitch coming nearer her and nearer.

The poor girl sat listless hours at a time, and moaned with inner anguish. And often when her father was talking to her and she giving mechanical replies, suddenly her cheek would burn like fire, and the old man would wonder what he had said to discompose her. Nothing. His words were less than air to her. It was the ever present dread sent the colour of shame into her burning cheek, no matter what she seemed to be talking and thinking about. But both shame and fear rose to a climax when she

came back that night from Margaret Van Eyck's. Her condition was discovered, and by persons of her own sex. The old artist, secluded like herself, might not betray her ; but Catherine, a gossip in the centre of a family, and a thick neighbourhood ? One spark of hope remained. Catherine had spoken kindly, even lovingly. The situation admitted no half course. Gerard's mother thus roused must either be her best friend or worst enemy. She waited then in racking anxiety to hear more. No word came. She gave up hope. Catherine was not going to be her friend. Then she would expose her, since she had no strong and kindly feeling to balance the natural love of babbling.

Then it was the wish to fly from this neighbourhood began to grow and gnaw upon her till it became a wild and passionate desire. But how persuade her father to this ? Old people cling to places. He was very old and infirm to change his abode. There was no course but to make him her confidant. Better so than to run away from him ; and she felt that would be the alternative. And now between her uncontrollable desire to fly and hide, and her invincible aversion to speak out to a man, — even to her father, — she vibrated in a suspense full of

lively torture. And presently betwixt these two came in one day the fatal thought, 'End all!' Things foolishly worded are not always foolish: one of poor Catherine's bugbears, these numerous canals, did sorely tempt this poor fluctuating girl. She stood on the bank one afternoon, and eyed the calm deep water. It seemed an image of repose, and she was so harassed. No more trouble. No more fear of shame. If Gerard had not loved her, I doubt she had ended there. As it was, she kneeled by the water-side, and prayed fervently to God to keep such wicked thoughts from her. 'Oh, selfish wretch,' said she, 'to leave thy father. Oh, wicked wretch to kill thy child, and make thy poor Gerard lose all his pain and peril undertaken for thy sight. I will tell father all, ay, ere this sun shall set.' And she went home with eager haste lest her good resolution should ooze out ere she got there.

Now, in matters domestic the learned Peter was simple as a child, and Margaret from the age of sixteen had governed the house gently but absolutely. It was therefore a strange thing in this house, the faltering irresolute way in which its young but despotic mistress addressed that person, who in a domestic sense was less important than Martin Wittenhaagen, or even

than the little girl who came in the morning and for a pittance washed the vessels, etc., and went home at night.

'Father, I would speak to thee.'

'Speak on, girl.'

'Wilt listen to me? And — and — not — and try to excuse my faults.'

'We have all our faults, Margaret; thou no more than the rest of us, but fewer, unless parental feeling blinds me.'

'Alas, no, father; I am a poor foolish girl, that would fain do well, but have done ill, — most ill, most unwisely, — and now must bear the shame. But, father, I love you, with all my faults; and will not you forgive my folly, and still love your motherless girl?'

'That ye may count on,' said Peter, cheerfully.

'Oh, well, smile not. For then how can I speak and make you sad?'

'Why, what is the matter?'

'Father, disgrace is coming on this house: it is at the door, and I the culprit. Oh, father, turn your head away. I — I — father, I have let Gerard take away my marriage lines.'

'Is that all? 'T was an oversight. 'T was the deed of a mad woman.'

'But, woe is me! that is not the worst.'

Peter interrupted her. 'The youth is honest,

and loves you dear. You are young. What is a year or two to you? Gerard will assuredly come back and keep troth.'

'And meantime, know you what is coming?'

'Not I, except that I shall be gone first for one.'

'Worse than that. There is worse pain than death. Nay, for pity's sake, turn away your head, father.'

'Foolish wench!' muttered Peter, but turned his head.

She trembled violently, and with her cheeks on fire began to falter out, 'I did look on Gerard as my husband — we being betrothed — and he was in so sore danger, and I thought I had killed him; and I — Oh, if you were but my mother I might find courage: you would question me. But you say not a word.'

'Why, Margaret, what is all this coil about? And why are thy cheeks crimson, speaking to no stranger but to thy old father?'

'Why are my cheeks on fire? Because — because — Father, kill me! Send me to heaven! Bid Martin shoot me with his arrow! And then the gossips will come and tell you why I blush so this day. And then, when I am dead, I hope you will love your girl again for her mother's sake.'